神社のススメ

～ホワと少女と神様と～

もくし

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アフタヌーンKC

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1

田中ユキ

アフタヌーン
KC366

講談社

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1

田中ユキ

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アフタヌーンKC
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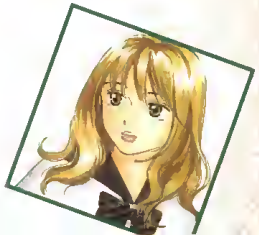
突然、神社で働く事になった主人公・里見。
そこには、外からでは分からない
「神社」という職場の厳しい現実と、
巫女たちに囲まれた楽しい生活が……。
今までにない新本格巫女漫画のスタートです！



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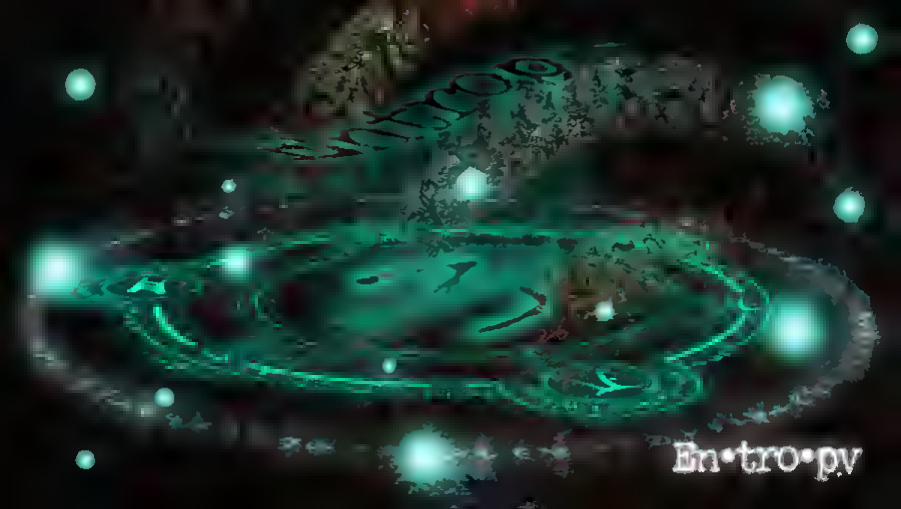
En•tro•pv

Jinjya No Susume

Miko: Normally translated as shrine maiden. Typically unmarried girls/women who help out with ceremonies as well as more practical things at a Shinto shrine. "Shrine maiden" is such a cumbersome term, though, so they will be known as just miko in the translation.

Hakama: The type of (often divided) pleated skirt you'll see them wearing. Miko mostly wear red hakama, priests usually black or blue ones. Regular workers/attendants/apprentices wear white.

If you find that something about the setting for the story makes no sense whatsoever to you, Wikipedia has some decent pages on Shinto and related stuff.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shinto

entropy

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神社のススメ

ホコと巫女と神隠し

1

田中ユキ

Jinjya No Susume
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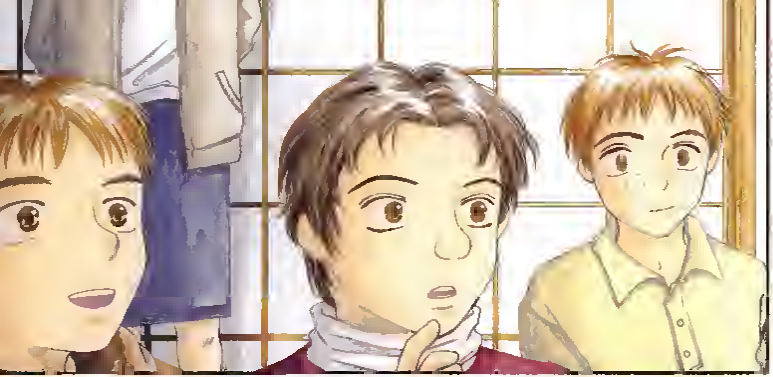
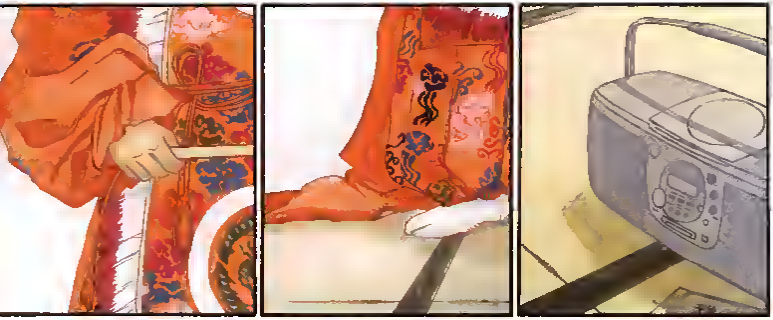
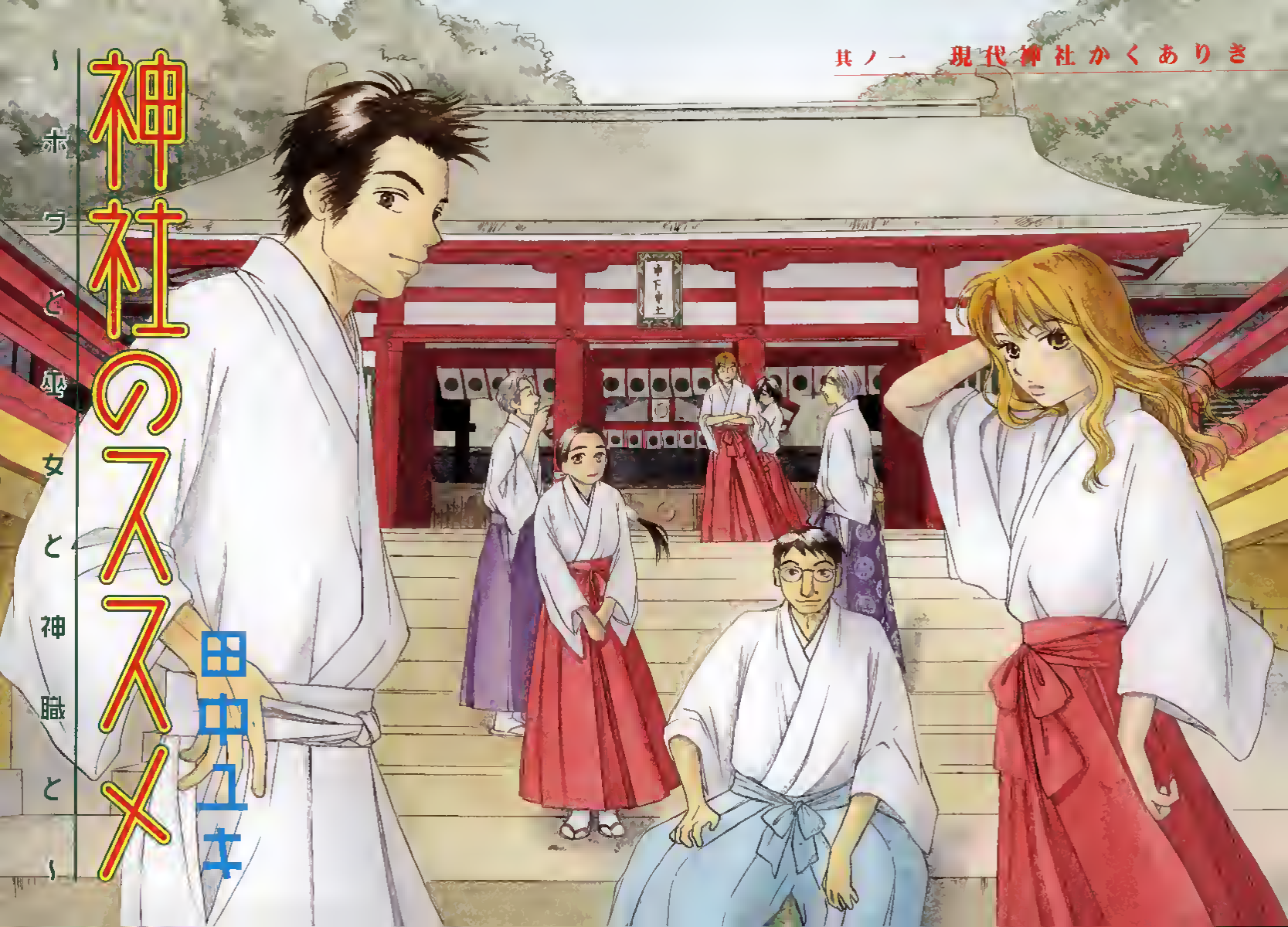
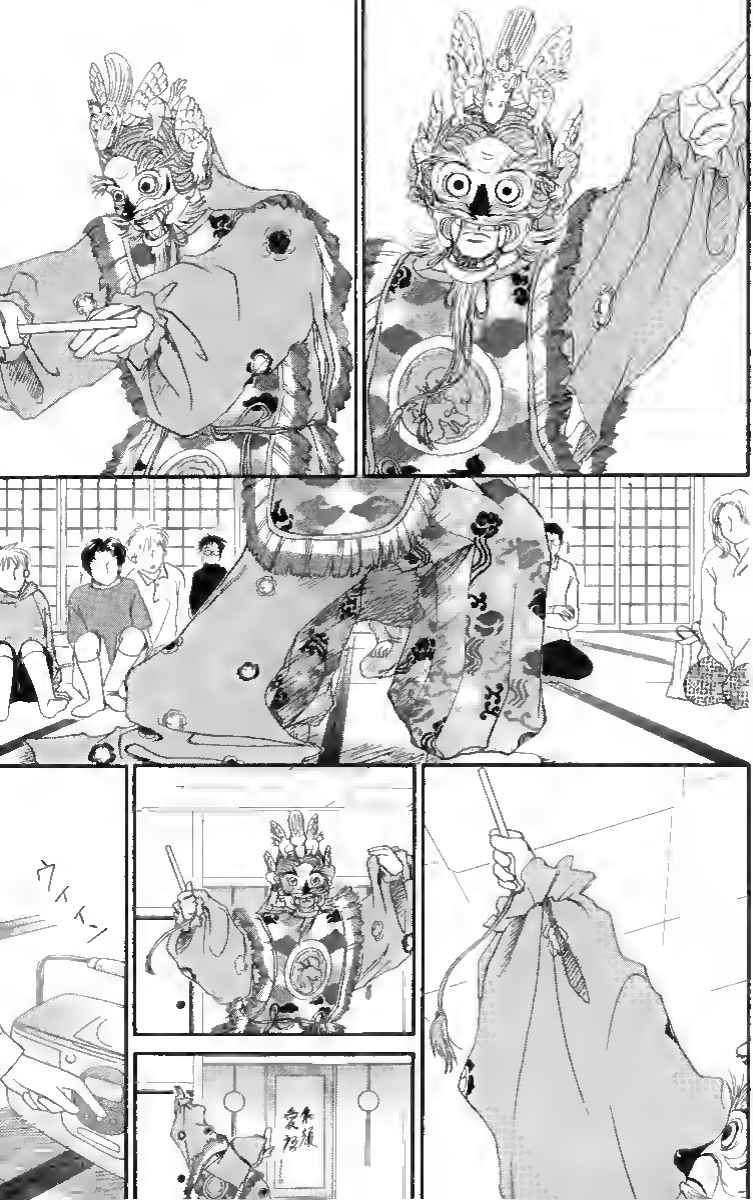


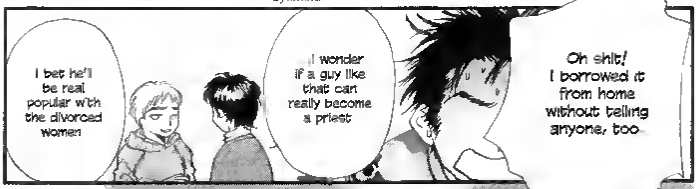



其ノ一　現代神社かくありき
神社のスズメ
～赤ラと巫女と神職と～
田中立


ウィーン

Since today is the last lesson, I thought I'd do the dance in this outfit.
Don't forget what I taught you now.
Ah—
Thank you, thank you
WAAHH
WAHH
CLAP CLAP
CLAP
Rilight
But you'll come back once in a while, won't you?
And besides, studying to be a Shinto priest isn't quite as easy as you thi—
NK!
Sorry, no can do I'm moving away, you know
<thud>
<snag>

AAHH!
Man, that was lame
<Gyahaha>


I bet he'll be real popular with the divorced women
...I wonder if a guy like that can really become a priest
Oh shit! I borrowed it from home without telling anyone, too

Kamishimo Shrine
In order to become a Shinto priest...

I had to complete the assigned courses.
I took a short correspondence course to get my certification.
After graduating from university, with some theoretical as well as practical classes in Shinto,
For someone who took the shortest route through uni, the rank after graduation is "seikai".
I hope to someday become a full-fledged priest.
CLAP
CLAP
To reach the next rank of "meikai", you need to do two years of service at a shrine, as well as complete all sorts of other training.
Do you ...
Satomi-kun.

Chief Priest, Okumura
Vice Chief Priest, Nitta
Why not a suit?
...normally come in a sweatsuit on a day like this?
Well, it's fine, I guess
I am indebted to your father, after all
It's fine? Really?
I didn't want to be rude, so I donned the newest clothes I have.
It's not really a matter of new or old
To be honest, I haven't used my suit in such a long time that some bugs seem to have eaten most of it.
So why didn't you enter the service right after you got out of university?
Yes. I taught regular people, at my parents' or at a friend's house.
I also worked part-time as a kendo teacher, and other things like that.
I see here that you were a dance instructor after graduation.

After I just barely managed to finish my studies,
I was more interested in using my body than my brains
And besides
My older brother is supposed to be the successful one in the family
Well, I guess it's best not to get involved in that whole thing.
How long has your brother been missing?
I think it's...
more than half a year now.
Right.
After all...

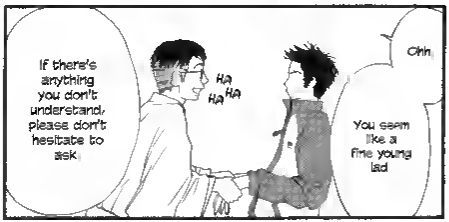
It's an old shrine, this Ame-no-Urasako-Hiko-no-Mikoto and Nagatahime-no-Mikoto are enshrined here, and it's an ex-kanpeichuusha*
The gods are said to grant you sound health and a long life, as well as protection from misfortune.
And the sacred object inside here is a mirror.

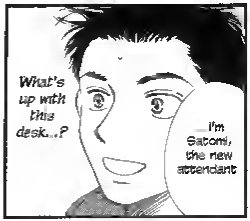
*A ranking in the official shrine hierarchy. This classification disappeared at the same time as the abolishment of Shinto as a state religion in 1945 hence the "ex-"

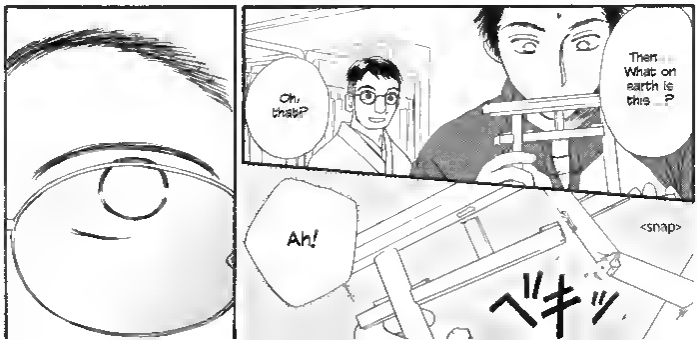
So this area has become a popular sightseeing spot. We get quite busy during the holidays
Besides the main shrine, there are three more subordinate ones
ガラッ
I'll introduce you to the people who are here today.
I'm Misorto.
Akimoto here, head miko.
Pleased to meet you I am Satomi Shinjirou

Showing up looking like that on his first time here? Is he an idiot, or what?
WHISPER
Yeah, seriously
WHISPER
WHISPER
I guess the face was okay, but it seems his head isn't
HO HO
WHISPER
...
With one more full-time miko that makes three in total.
Then we have three more girls working part time
I'll be starting here the day after tomorrow.
Great!
I've only met her twice, though.
He brought her along when he came to visit the shrine back home...
Oh...
Satomi-san!
Ah—
Here's someone you might remember, my daughter Ryouko

*The name of his position at the shrine. At the top of the hierarchy is the guuji, then gonguuji, negi, gonnegi and shusshi, in descending order. Satomi is a shusshi, i.e. at the bottom. Nitta is the gonguuji.



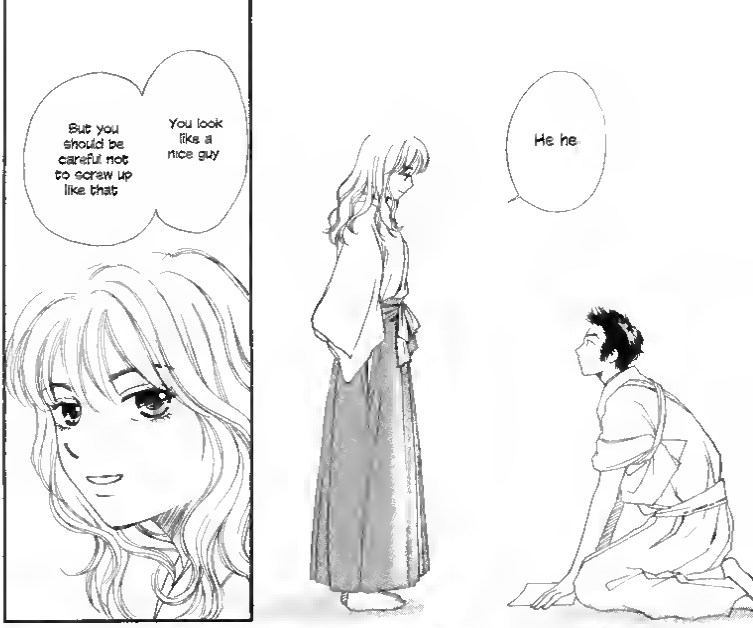


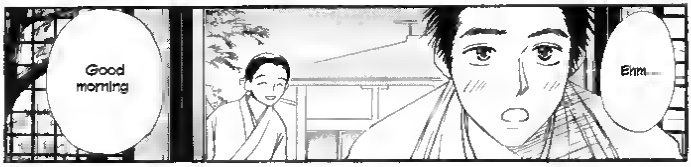


WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING WITH OTHER PEOPLE'S POSSESSIONS !?
YOU BASTARD!
<sock!>
S-Sorry
Okay
Good people?
Starting the day after tomorrow, do your best, okay?
Never mind that. They're all good people.
Well...
Are you all right?

1
This is something I have to do.
Well,
I wonder if the path I've chosen is really a good one...
good or not ...
Tweet
Tweet
Since it's Sunday, I guess there'll be a lot to do today...
chirp
chirp
chirp

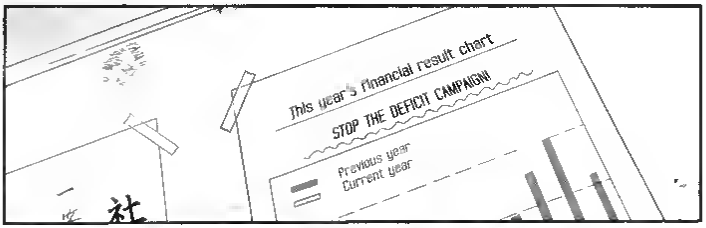
Hmm—
So you're our new priest, huh?


He he
You look like a nice guy
But you should be careful not to screw up like that


Good morning
Erm...

Ah, Nitta-san, good morning
That girl just now is she a part-timer?
That's Maruoka-san. She's been here since last month
She's still just 15, though. Don't you think she looks a lot more mature than that??
15!?

She was beautiful, though...


This year's financial result chart
STOP THE DEFICIT CAMPAIGN!
Previous year
Current year

Our economic situation grows worse every year. As I've told you many times already, our earnings keep decreasing.
Again this year, we must try to put a stop to this decline.
If we continue on like this, the next bonus will have to be cut.

Hey, what's this?
Since everyone's here now, let's begin the meeting.

Increase the number of regulars by greeting people kindly and with a smiling face.
GUIDE-LINES!
Income goal!?
Right, today's income goal is 120 000 yen!
Sign Guidelines
社訓
Not a speck of dirt A clean, bright and fun shrine
Sincerely deal with even the tiniest problems in your purifications.
MISONO, THOSE EYES AREN'T SMILING!
Excuse me there's a call from the main office
HEY, NEW GUY! YOU'RE TOO STIFF!
Wh-whisky !?
LET'S SEE SOME GUMS!
Okay Next we have smiling practice
All together now Whisky!
No no, you don't need to be so reserved
Hello? Did the goods reach you?
It's the least we could do

Hello? We'd like to have our new car purified
Yeas
It's supposed to be employee training
Is this like a regular thing?
Pretty steep
What should we do?
That is up to you, but .
Roughly how much does it cost?
Most people end up giving something around 5000
Trivia
In some cases, there is no set fee for the different ceremonies. The going rate is somewhere around 5000-10000 yen, though.
The custom is for the mother of the husband in the family to carry the child. Boys are usually dressed up in a black kimono with the family crest on it, girls in a colourful dyed pattern one.
Trivia
After 31 days for newborn boys, and 33 days for girls, children are brought on their first visit to the local shrine, to report that the delivery went well and to pray for the child's continued good health.
Excuse me
It's about an omiya-mairi—

*Goods that the worshippers recieve. The meaning is originally something like "hand me downs" - food offerings to the gods that were distributed among the people.

We make up for the difference in the "setsukshin"* they get
The godparents usually tag along for a first shrine visit, you know.
There's, like, three times as much in this envelope
First shrine visit
Traffic safety
Whoa.
Sacred sake
Kamishimo Shrine GoodHealth/ Misfortune Removal Charm
For 5000, you get our full traffic safety package
Traffic Safety, Kamishimo Shrine
Kamishimo Shrine Traffic Safety
<boom boom>
And at this shrine,
a ritual with miko dancing and drumming takes something like 5
Since purification by a priest usually takes about 10 minutes
For a simple service, 3500 is the usual
<rustle rustle>
The labour cost alone is 500 yen
TAP TAP TAP
Right. And everything that requires studying up beforehand, or special skills, raises the price.

*denden taiko: Spinning Drum: the one with the drum on a stick with the little balls on strings

The people here...
sure talk about money a lot.
From time to time, there are people who donate as little as 2000.
Things are nowhere near as good as they was during the bubble economy
While the people who donated 3000 get a bit less instead
So, the company before who donated 10000 get additional merchandise, like a denden taiko* and a votive plaque
<rustle rustle>
Satomi-san, are you any good at drumming?
Well...
We did have a course in it at university, but
A new baby and a new car are both things to celebrate
Comb ned service...? I guess everyone's equal before god, but...

がばっ
this is bad
I'm out of nicotine
What?
Traffic Safety
flip
Kake-makumo
kashikoki
You take over the drumming!
Hey, wait
It's an order from the head miko!
For real !?
What's up with her?
She could at least show me the drum pattern once before running off!!

<ding ding dung ding>
シャラララララ
kashikomi kashikomi
mo mousuu—
Crap!
Whoaa, the prayer's already over!
Isn't the rhythm weirdly slow today?
Hmm?
ドォンッ
ドォンッ
Would you look at her dance.
Wow—

You mean the drums?
Don't you feel like they're speeding up?
I sure hope the rhythm pattern's supposed to go something like this.
ドコドコ
B-better get these hands moving
ドンッ
This is too hard
...
シャン
シャン
シャン
Eeeek...
They're all looking this way.

<crash>
<slip>
<silence>
I'm extremely disappointed in you
Sorry it's been a long time...
Here I thought we'd gotten some skill hands
If you suck at it, then say so!

Satomi-kun,
could I have a word with you?
MISONO-SAN!
Now now, I'll feel sorry for the guy if you're too harsh with him
And say things like, "useless", or "incompetent", or "good for nothing", or "why don't you quit already?"
Look.
I would appreciate if you could be a little more serious about learning things here
How are you at the ryuuteki?
Think you can do that?
I've almost never practiced it
. . .
I am being serious, though

The ryuuteki is also called youjou or outeki. Normally made from dried bamboo. The name literally means dragon flute

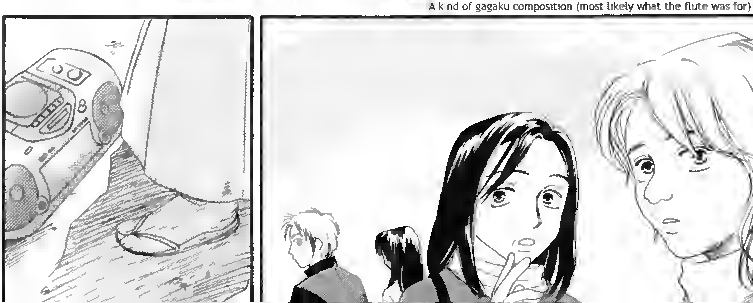
Hmm—
Ah, but I'm good at dancing instead
Whaat?
We don't really need any male dancers
It's quite enough that the miko do that
I told your father this before,
what's important here is good skills in gagaku*
...It's the first time I've heard about it.
*old Japanese court music (literally "elegant music")

Your brother was quite skilled
So to be honest, I was expecting a bit more
But I'm me. And besides—
Speaking as a businessman here
I can tell you that people who are of no use will get laid off

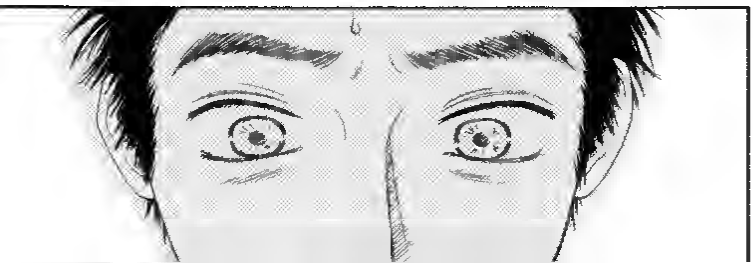
If you want to dance that much, I have the perfect spot for it.
Oh, I have an idea.
Please practice your dancing here
HUH!?
If you can make the people passing by out here stop for a bit and watch,
we may very well increase the number of visitors to the shrine itself.

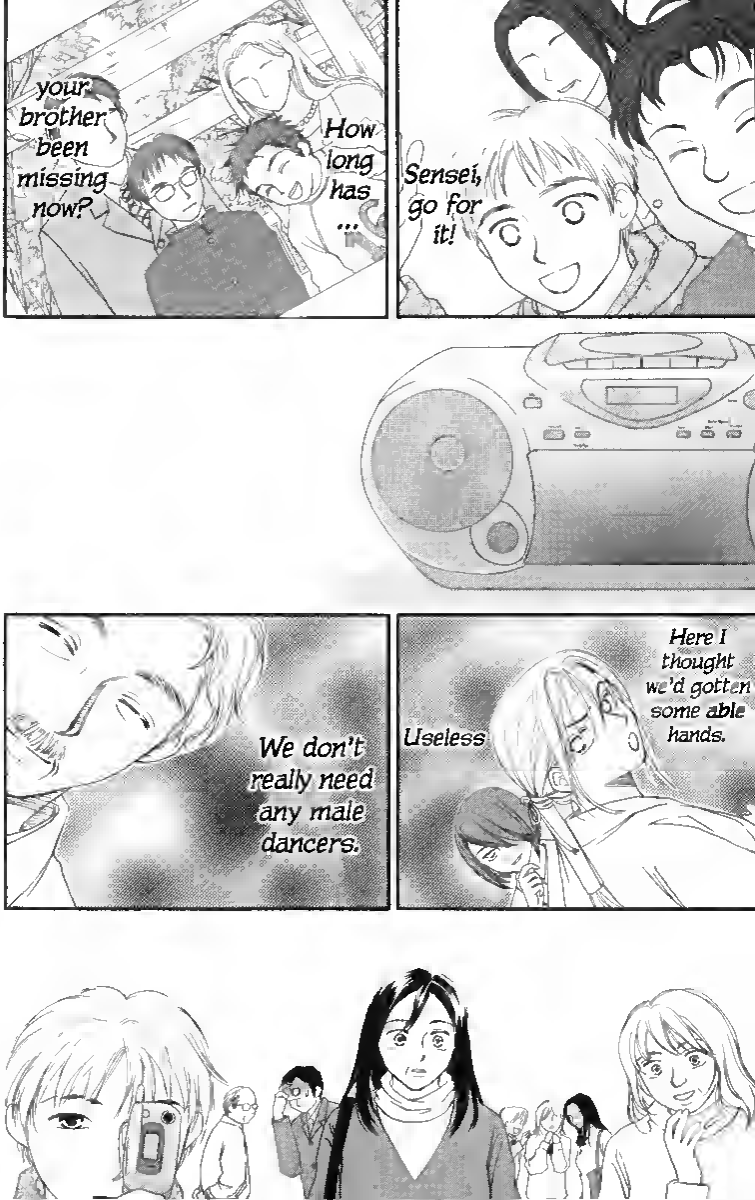
Y-YOU WANT ME TO MAKE A FOOL OF MYSELF LIKE THAT !?
It's hardly foolish
Since we had to cancel today's ebenraku*, we need something else if we're to meet the quota.
The business of a shrine isn't merely religion.
It's also amusement.
Do your best now
As a professional

A kind of gagaku composition (most likely what the flute was for)



What did I hope to achieve by coming here?




your brother been missing now?
How long has ...
Sensei, go for it!
We don't really need any male dancers.
Useless
Here I thought we'd gotten some able hands.

Hmm
Seems the number of young women coming in to worship went up, anyway...
Third-dan in kendo, likes to run marathons... Is this Satomi-san's resume?
Yes. Someone forgot it in the guest building
His home is actually a great shrine, with grounds 80 000 tsubo large
And it seems his mother's family is in the service of the Imperial Household Agency
He's the successor to a shrine as well?
EEHHH
THAT GUY!?
I thought he was a complete rookie...
80 000 tsubo = roughly 260 000 square metres, or 65 acres
GRAGGLE

This music
Wouldn't it be great if we could sell as many charms tomorrow as we did today?
Man I'm beat
Ignoring me, are you!?
<kick>
Where are you going?
Oh, it's Satomi-san
...

SHEEK
<slam>
ガターッ
Ah

...
This is pretty good
Would you like me to make you some tea?
STARE
ドキッ
Wh-what?
And you mustn't give up after a single day.
If you do, no other place is going to want to give you a job either.
You know,
I'm good at figuring out what people are thinking
just by looking at their faces

Isn't a shrine supposed to be about religion?
The people here are all realists.
They try to do things in the same way as any regular company.
Like some kind of salarymen.
I don't know what to say.

Genuine belief in a god
At least,
that's how it was when I was a kid.
But ...
There you go.
stay here a while longer, and see how things work out.
I guess I'll...
Somehow ...
I'm totally nervous.
It's really hard to believe she's 9 years younger.

...Eh?

I already got your birth date from your resume
Let me see that hand
I-
told you I can see things about people, didn't I?
Well look This line on the side here is the marriage line
It's slightly red, see?
EH!?
There may even have been a predestined meeting just recently.
Your love fortune is extremely good right now.
—Ah
So that's all it was?
My fortunes are usually on the mark
Isn't that great? Now you have something to look forward to here
It seems like there's a big chance of marriage around 26 years of age
The other party is someone who grew up under similar circumstances. Someone younger than you

That "other party".
Who is it !?
...
HUUH
To be honest, all the girls here are cute.
In two years time, huh?
Ah... But that means ...
She's the only one it can't be.
Too bad...

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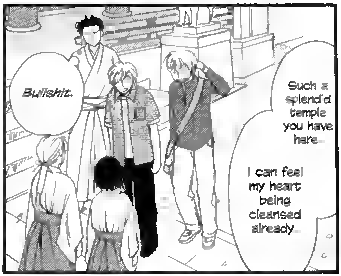
QC
riseabove77

Second One:
Advice from the Miko

祝詞作文法
Book: Shinto Prayer Composition
Studying your sutras?
WHOA!
Long time no see
What? I thought I told you not to come here!
We're off from work, so we thought we'd go for a drive...

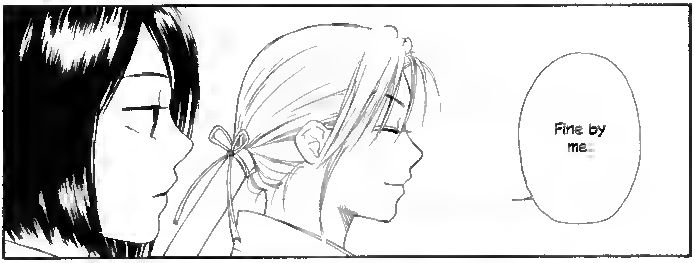
<rattle rattle>
But, man.
カラン
カラン
You guys
These are Shinto prayers
I've only told you about it a million times, and you still mix it up with Buddhism
Friends of yours?
Besides, after that you're supposed to bow once, clap your hands twice and then bow again. It's only good manners!
No, it isn't.
Oh, come on. Either way is fine.
Hey.
You look like a completely different person from the guy we know in that get-up.
<clink>
I've told you this as well, but
First you make the money offering, then you sound the bell to call out the god


Such a splend'd temple you have here...
I can feel my heart being cleansed already...
Bullshit.

We're old classmates from high school...
S-sure thing!

Oh, sorry. You must have a lot of work to do today
Okay then, how about the four of us go instead?

How about it, Satomi?
Right. We thought we'd go out drinking tonight, maybe you'd like to join us?


Fine by me.

...So that's what they really came here for?
YAY~
A date with miko!
Right on—

Well, in the first place, they're only supposed to assist the priests.
There isn't much in the way of special qualifications needed or anything. As long as you're unmarried, you can become one.

Miko are...

Sure, most guys out there...
...really like miko.

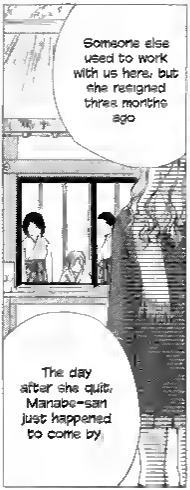
to help out with stuff like the exchange of nuptial cups or dancing at marriage ceremonies, and to prepare for festivals.
The main jobs are to confer protection charms and to receive people who come here for purification.
They also have to be able to handle ordinary office jobs.
When there are no visitors to the shrine,
they handcraft things like earthenware bells or small items to use at the festivals.
Thank you for visiting
Please come again
Of course they have to work weekends and all through New Year's. And they only get 5 days off a month.
Oh! KIMONO!
IONY
Sure are a lot of foreigners here today
And ...

They have to memorise a lot of things too.
Hold it, you two!
What is with that lipstick colour?
How many times have I told you not to wear that dark red kind?
And no lip gloss either!
There's a massive amount of duties they have to attend to, it's a surprisingly hard job.
'Scuse me...
Hey! Go fetch those five boxes of charms out by the torii.
MAN—
It just has to be when we're missing two people.
がたん
Wait, I'll go too.
Don't worry about it. Manual labour is what they're here for.
Eh...?

Not at all, please have a seat
Would you like the same amount of rice as usual?
Don't, I'll get it myself
* his shrine provides meals for the people who work there
Ah.
It's entirely different from what most people see.
Miko sure don't have it easy either.
Let me help you with that.
Hey...

Supposedly, the life force of the tree will help make your wish come true
What's the deal with people tying their fortunes to a pine branch, anyway?
Really?
It's a real pain to get the ones we can't reach
You can take it home with you, as well
And keep it until your wish is fulfilled, so you'll be reminded of the moral lesson written on it
Oh?
Yeah. I'm an ujiko* at this shrine, and my granddad asked me to.
It's been five years already
So...
Did you two become miko because your folks are devoted Shinto followers?
The other party is someone who grew up under similar circumstances... Someone younger than you.

*Ujiko All people born within the area of influence of the shrine's patron god


Someone else used to work with us here, but she resigned three months ago
The day after she quit, Manabe-san just happened to come by

I found this job through the service sector listing at the employment agency
I... see
And my mother said that at least working as a miko wouldn't be an embarrassment at a marriage interview

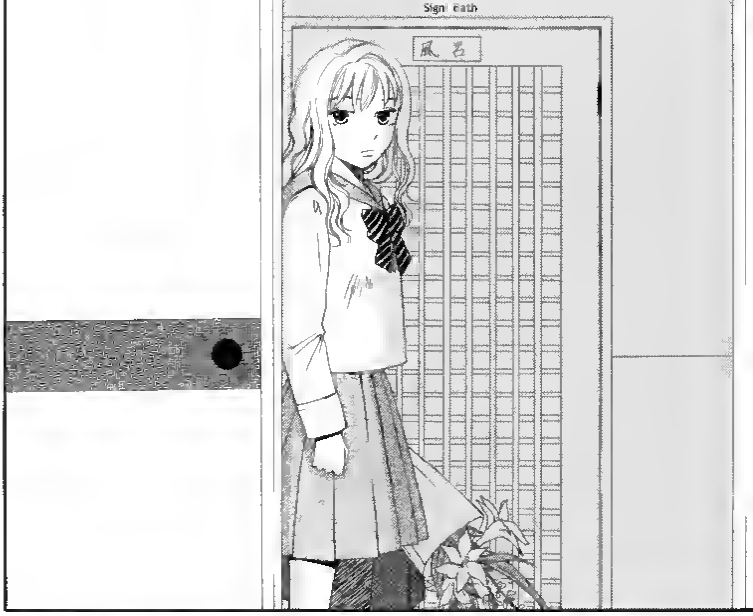
I celebrate Christmas, go to hear the bells at the temple on New Year's Eve and get my fortune at the shrine on New Year's Day, like most people

Christian Buddhist and Shinto traditions respectively

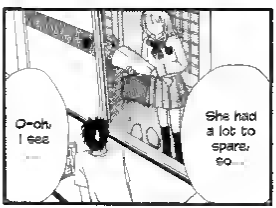
This is an omiai or marriage interview
クオン
...
There, don't you think the person today was nice?
Let's meet again
Ryouko-san, thank you very much for today

It didn't really click.
More importantly, we're running out of eldest sons from any good shrines.
That again?
Sign: Night duty room
宿直室
The lady who works the kitchen here made hamburger for me.
right
What?
Yes yes, I am eating properly.

Well, it's not always easy
I don't know how many times I've heard "Your brother would do that much better."
I wonder what he could be doing now
After having run off with 7 million yen...
Mom, you should be more angry with him
How long did it take you to save up that money, anyway?


風呂

I was invited to dinner over at the head priest's home.
so his wife could teach me some things about flowers


O-oh, I see
She had a lot to spare, so...

W-why are you ..?
Did she hear that!?

びくっ
SLAM!

パキン
Even if she heard me,
I don't think I have to worry about her telling anyone...
パキン
But...
That uniform sure is cute
AH!
I mustn't be led astray.
She's still just a kid.

"I'm good at reading people's minds just by looking at their faces."
ドキッ
Hey...

Would it be a lot of trouble if I asked to stay over here tonight?
EEH!?
...
Does that mean ...
she just wants to borrow this room?
O-or could it be ...?
I sort of got in a fight with the parents, and I don't feel much like going home right now
I can't?

ガラッ
WHAAT!? WAIT, THAT'S NOT...
I guess it would be a bother to you
Okay, fine
Oh? Chino-chan, what are you doing here?
I could ask you guys the same thing
I got a phone call from Akimoto-san all of a sudden...
We're throwing you a welcoming party.
What about the date?
<pull>
It sucked, so we ran away
Come on, the guest of honour sits over here.

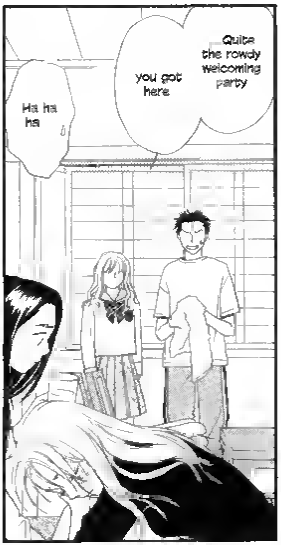
http://www.geocities.com/sg_tiger_geo/fundoshi.html

When we went out with those guys earlier ...
It feels like...
You're a bit different from during the day
'Scuse me, some more food over here! Fried rice with kimchee and fried chocolate bananas, please
You think?
At the really busy times, we hardly have time to eat or go to the bathroom
It's no picnic. You don't find that kind of male-dominated environment in many other places nowadays.
I guess it's 'cause of the stress that I've been smoking too much lately
What? I thought it was supposed to be a fun job?
You said you're 20. How long can you keep working as miko, anyway?

Pretty much
Is it true that they're really strict about you having relationships with guys?
Of course, you can switch to green hakama and become a clerk instead
I guess we'd have to retire around 25 somewhere
What?
You... really are virgins, then?
So... That means...
And you're supposed to be like those people long ago and go commando under the hakama as well
Well, you know it's called shrine maiden, isn't it?

Asshats. Treating me like an idiot...
I even went out with a priest before—
Hey, hey
EVERYONE— I'M NOT ACTUALLY A VIRGIN!
Now wait just a minute here!
Always skipping school and smoking—
And I used to be in a girl gang—

Please don't
Or "Shut up about bonus cuts already!"
Don't you think there are better things to shout!? Like "Give us a raise!"
OW!
ガブッ
it's a little worse than usual, I'd say
Does she always get like this?
MMPH MMPH
Ah—
It's even bleeding
Come on. Give me a break here—
BLEEERGH


Quite the rowdy welcoming party
you got here
Ha ha ha

But
Let's not make a big deal out of what happened tonight

She was born in the neighbourhood right? Does she still live around here?
Yes I can show you the way

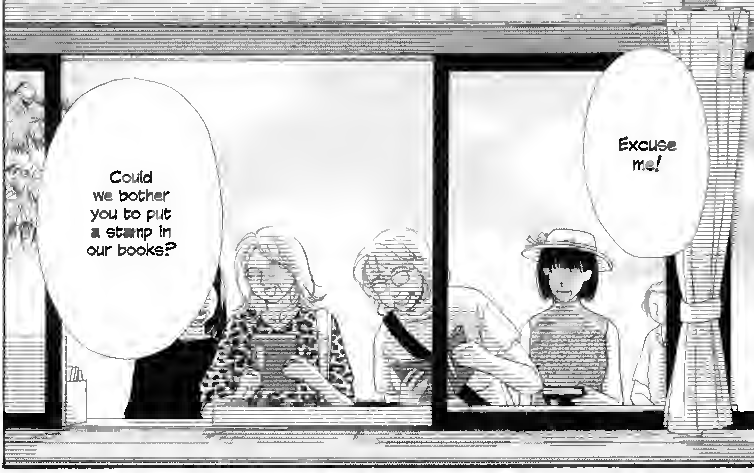
Lessee the loincloth man—
Yes yes We'll save that for next time

ひょい

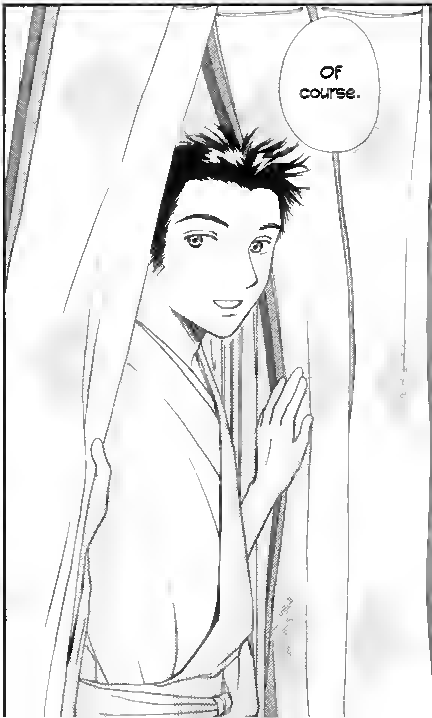
She just went home.
Hey, where's Manabe-san?
You all have work tomorrow as well, so maybe you'd better get going.
There's something about that girl...
I do too wear panties, dammit-
I can't get her out of my mind.
Satomi-san, you're really kind.
Oh?
The other priests would definitely have left her to take care of herself

I'M NOT THE VIRGIN HERE. THAT'S NITTA-SAN AND MANABE!
Well, yes. But.
Just, no!!
N-No!
uuu—
STUPID AKIMOTO-SAN!
Hey. That hurts, commando miko.
POKA
POKA
POKA
S-So that's how it is ...
Second One The End

Third One:
vs. field-tripping middle schooler


Excuse me!
Could we bother you to put a stamp in our books?

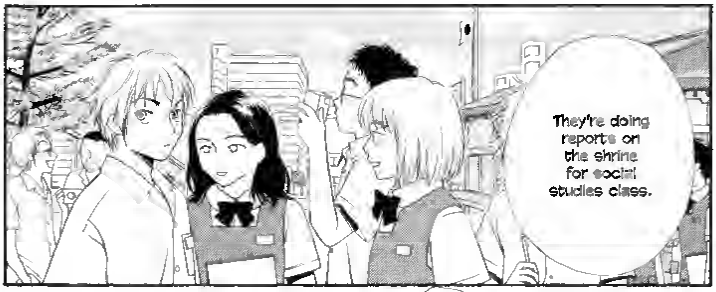
Oh my What a cute little priest
How old might you be?
キュッ
キュッ
It will take me quite a while to sign these Please go ahead and visit the shrine while I do


Of course.

ぺたん

奉献
神下
すっ
すっ
"Would it be a lot of trouble if I asked to stay over here tonight?"
...She must have fallen for me!
This is a bit of a problem.
Even though she's just 15, she—

Satomi-kun. Could you maybe hold off on throwing brushes around until the ink has dried, at least?
Man, that was close. Our eyes almost met there.
Hey, you there
He's probably jumpy after getting chewed out by the bitchy head miko.
Hasn't he been acting even more suspiciously than usual lately?
Just showing some adorable children around the shrine
First Appearance
Kanno; Negi (senior priest)
Stand in doing what?
Tell you the truth, I have to get back to my own shrine now.
Sorry about this, but could I ask you to stand in for me?



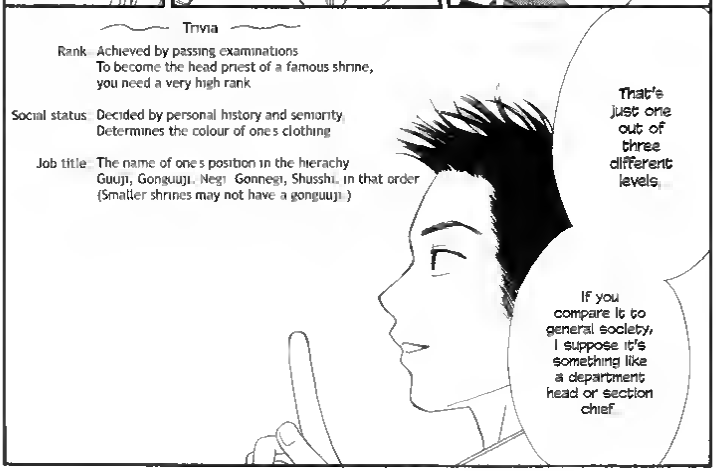
That's not his name, it's his title
Ah, well...
Negi, that's an unusual name
Negi-saaan!
What? Wait!
Answering the question of the public is also an important job
Well, I'll leave it to you

Trivia

Rank: Achieved by passing examinations
To become the head priest of a famous shrine, you need a very high rank

Social status: Decided by personal history and seniority
Determines the colour of one's clothing

Job title: The name of one's position in the hierachy
Guuji, Gonguuji, Negi Gonnegi, Shusshi, in that order
(Smaller shrines may not have a gonguuji.)


That's just one out of three different levels
If you compare it to general society, I suppose it's something like a department head or section chief

I wonder if a part-time monk can really explain things...
Top rank = Stiff white silk
First rank = Stiff purple silk with insignia
Second rank = Plain purple silk
Third/fourth rank = Light blue (robin egg blue) silk
Apprentices, trainees = White cotton
Office staff = Pine green
So white is like an underling, huh?
You can see the differences in social status in the colour of the hakama.
Perhaps I should take over
Satomi-kun
Is this task still too heavy for you?
And we're priests, not monks!
Who are you calling part-timer!?
We'll let you participate in the evening ceremony
Well then, please follow me
.....
actually have to study to get ahead!
Those of us who are just poor parishoners from around here, and not some successor to a shrine,
My station is quite different from your silly cheer-leading.

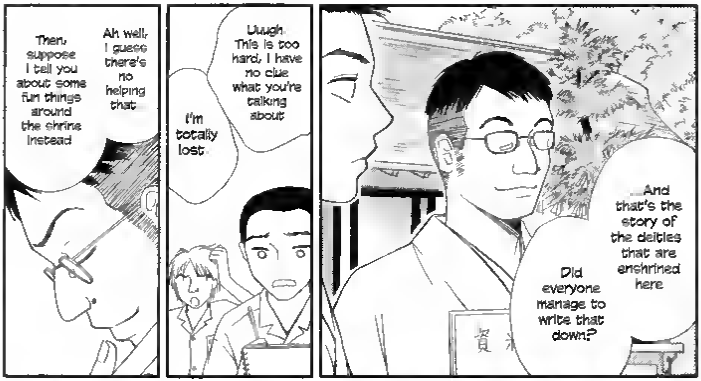
So you really are the gopher around here
Every morning, from six o'clock, he cleans this place
Wow!
This is the first time I've been inside here
What is this kid's problem?
AH HA HA
There are services performed here every evening, all year round.
The text on those is Ocharae no Kotoba*
What is it?
Okay then, everyone take one of these
The text lists sins or impure acts, that the gods are asked to exorcise the effects of.
You can even find it summarised in the Nihon Shoki*.

*Something like "words of great purification"

*Second oldest remaining record of Japanese history (though parts of it are myth) From the early 8th century

"Push open the worthy doors of heaven..."?
Ooharae no kotoba~
divinely abiding in
the Plain of High Heaven
At the command of the mighty ancestral gods and goddesses
the many myriad kami were divinely gathered together to

The original text is quite old. Imagine it being like reading Beowulf in English, and you can understand the kid's puzzled look. (This wording is shamelessly borrowed from Felicia Gressitt Bock's translation of the Engi Shiki.)


Then, I suppose I'll tell you about some fun things around the shrine instead
Ah well, I guess there's no helping that
Uuugh. This is too hard, I have no clue what you're talking about
I'm totally lost
And that's the story of the deities that are enshrined here
Did everyone manage to write that down?

For example, this komainu
These are carved from stone, in left-and-right pairs.
One in a pair will usually have its mouth open, the other its mouth closed, so they form the word "Aun" together

*Inari is the deity of rice/harvest

Not quite like the foxes you see at some shrines, who were originally messengers of Inari*
Those kinds of animals associated with a particular deity are called kenzoku
MY LITTLE KOMAINU 1
Nowadays, there's not much difference between the two. But originally, there would be one lion and one dog. They came here from China
They're sacred beasts meant to protect against evil spirits.
2

Just look at my little baby, everyone. The curve of the hip and these lovely paws, for instance
PAT PAT
STROKE
Special points of note are the kind of stone used and the inclination of the neck, and ...
I don't think the children have any problem understanding that you're a rabid fan, anyway.
Other animals like that include monkeys, cows, deer, wild boars, wolves and even rabbits
But these poses, this variation of features, really make the komainu the best!
Tawara-san.
NO WAY!
WAH HA HA
TAP TAP

Is it all right if I join in as well?
Eh?
Well... I guess.
SHE'S CUTE
STARE
HMPF
.....
Okay
AHEM
But please observe from the back

Have you ever seen them do anything?
The foxes, I mean.
Next up, we have...
The foxes I told you about before. There are approximately 30000 shrines to Inari all over the country besides the one you see here, and the main one is in Kyoto.
Question!

Tawara-san...
Aren't you going to answer?
STOP TEASING THEM SAKAGAMI
Are you really fine with that?
It's not like you'll be able to convince other people
If you can't prove that those things exist,
You have an affinity for things like that, right? Isn't that why you became a priest?
Seen any ghosts? Or can you use shikigami?

Oh, shut up already
You sure don't have any manners, kid
KID, SHE SAYS-
KID IS IT?
I've never actually seen anything like that, but just the feeling that something's there is enough for me to want to investigate it
Like, how a woman in a nurse's uniform can be more exciting than one who's completely naked
Well, moving right along
Oh crap.
TIGHT
TIGHT

What I was trying to say is... Even if you can't see something, it can still be fun imagining it
It's good to have dreams... Or something
...HUH!?
Even though, originally, one was a kind of cat and one was a dog, you could say they've become a couple now
Like the komainu you heard about before
Shinto is... Well, it was born from nature, and has gradually evolved over time
Sure, there are things in it that don't make a lot of sense
I can get you some blow-ups of these, so please write a good report
OHH!?
Ah
You there, the girl with the bobbed hair, you seem very interested
WHA HA HA
There are lots of points there that you could investigate further... Like, say, how it's weird that even the females have manes
Or maybe you could make a report on these animals from a biological point of view
And for some reason, there are a lot of the type that has its butt raised in a mating pose like this
No, seriously. Look here, the male even has a willy

Hey. We're fine here, so you go do something else.
Oh, okay...
That guy...
He's slandering our religion.
And, did you know that our national soccer team has a three-legged yatagarasu* on their uniforms?
*A crow with many legs. Sacred bird of Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess
I think your talk went over better with them than Tawara-san's.
Perhaps this kind of work really suits you
Hmm, well...
I guess I could have told the children a thing or two about dancing instead

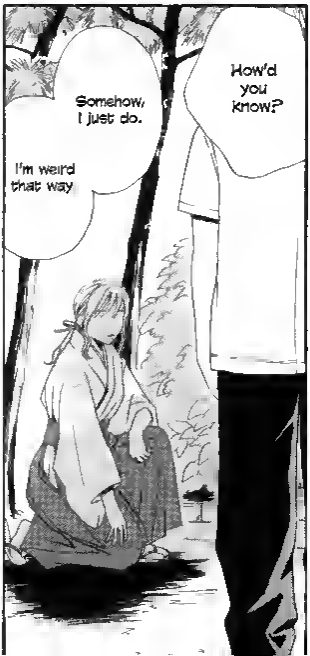
...
Satomi-san, you're really mature.
No matter what people say...
You still always try your best.
But I mustn't! She's still just 15...
I was totally about to answer her feelings there.
Danger! Danger!
?
UUUUH
Hey, priest guy.

Sorry about before.
Your explanations were... interesting
...
Is that so?
Glad to hear it!
I think they were looking for you over there
Oh.
Really?
You're pretty young for a miko
Are you in senior high?
What? No one was calling for me?
Nope

I still have lots of things I want to ask about this place.
Why?

Hey.
Give me your mail address.

Satomi-kun, you have work to do.
That little shit! He's probably making a pass at Manabe-san right now.

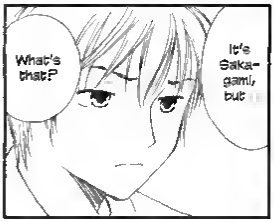

How'd you know?
Somehow, I just do.
I'm weird that way.

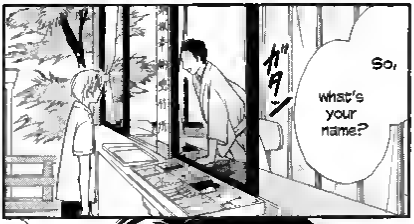
You're an only child, right?
Your parents were so happy to finally get a kid
that they've been catering to your every whim.

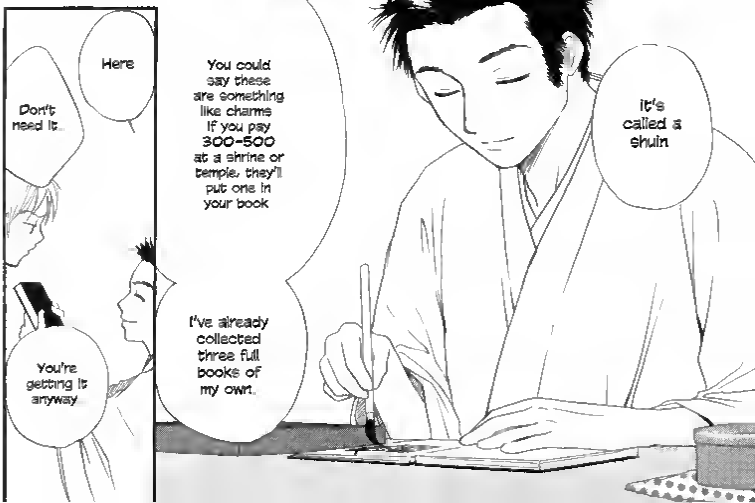
You've always felt that you're more mature than your friends
You always aim for top grades
Since you play a lot of sports too, you're popular with the girls. And you have a lot of self-confidence
"She embarrassed me in front of everyone."
So now you can't forgive me
If you don't want me looking in on more embarrassing things,
it would be best for you to go home now.

Come over here for a sec
Looks like he was shot down...

Heeey. Leaving already?
タタタ


What's that?
It's Sakagami, but


So, what's your name?
ガラン


Here
Don't need it.
You're getting it anyway
You could say these are something like charms If you pay 300-500 at a shrine or temple, they'll put one in your book
I've already collected three full books of my own.
It's called a shuin

Thanks...
Keep collecting them, okay?
Right now, you probably couldn't care less.
But when these things have turned into memories, you'll be glad that you started out when you were young.
Hey, Manabe-chan Wasn't that middle schooler just trying to chat you up?
What did you talk about?
Well...

Sip
Sip
Sip
I have no interest in children.
So not much
Tawara-san, could I stay at your house tonight?
PFWWWWT
You know, the one with the fortune-telling.
Would you mind if she stayed over again today?
Yeah, it's about that girl who stayed over at our place before.
Fighting with your parents again, you bad girl?
Fine by me, I just have to call the wife first
THWAP
Don't dirty up the place!

That middle schooler today was pretty cute, anyway
COUGH
COUGH
You know, Manabe-chan is just two years older than those "children"
So it wasn't just me.
But when you're that age, two years make a huge difference
...she'd be better off like that than with some older guy with a lolita complex, anyway.
A nine year difference, that's a crime instead.
Who are you talking about?
Lolita complex?
About you, of course.

ME!?
Wha—
This smells like a pay cut for you
Didn't you just give that kid a free stamp book, too?
Daddy, it's a misunderstanding!
Satomi-kun, we can't have lewd and indecent behaviour here
Highly suspicious!
You've been ogling Manabe-chan for quite some time now
No, that's not..

...I found a new thing to worry about.
And so, just barely into the second month of trying to become a priest...
Third One: The End

This is a type of fortune telling, or divination, that kids like to do

Fourth One:
The Hakama Girls Appreciation Association appears

Even though it was all just a misunderstanding!

Yes, yes.
A4 for me
Hey, Misono. Get me a B5
Looks like it'll be hot again today.
That really sucks
My rash is itching something fierce again
Sorry, but could you rub some lotion on it for me?
That again?
Rhight
Come over here for a bit
Ryoko-chan!

Satomi-san, isn't this your day off?
Oh.
Ohh, that's it Right there Aaah
Ryoko-chan you've got it there
He's always like this when the higher-ups are away
There's something important I wanted to speak to you about.
Yes, well...
You know, that thing about me being a lolicon--
Good morning everyone!

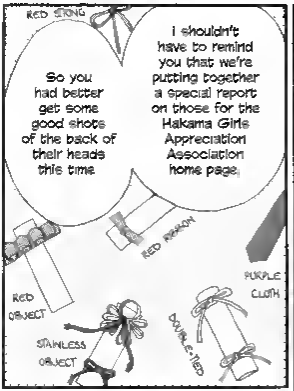
Shrines may appear to be idle during the weekdays, but...
Shuffle
Shuffle
Oh, I see...
Isn't that something...
School's out for the summer, you know.
What are you doing here!?
Whoa!
We have to get this done today, okay?
It's quite a bit of work.
In preparation for festivals and the like, the priests have to draw up letters of invitation. These are then mailed out by the miko to people who live around the shrine, and to others who have expressed an interest in it. This whole procedure takes place tens of times per year.
Now, really...
We have something like that?
Well then, I suppose I should go update the home page
ガリガリ

I don't recall any Shinto ceremonies with that kind of definition.
What's the meaning of worshipping through a computer, when you can't call the attention of the gods or have their spirit be present?
For a shrine this size, it's only common sense that we at least post the big annual events on a home page.
I really wanted to build an awesome site that people could go to for a sort of virtual worship, but...
tap tap
'Cause, you know, we only have five days off per month, and no time off around New Year's.
At least with the computer, I can go on virtual trips to shrines all over the country.
I saw on a site about komainu that the ones we have here got two stars out of five.
Why the hell only two!?
If you've got a problem with that, take it up with the other komainu freaks.
Hah.
Made by a bunch of idiots with too much time on their hands, no doubt.
Komainu aside, there sure are a lot of sites about miko.

We've finally arrived.
Our second day destination, the main Kamishimo shrine!
Yes!
I LOVE MIKO
The buildings around here are huge, President
There should be quite a few miko here as well
Hm
More importantly, we have received tips that their level is high.

You must do your very utmost here!
We've been to four other places already, and we didn't get any decent pictures so far.
Got it? Taa-san, Micchi.

What was that!?
But, don't miko look the same everywhere, all year round?
Miko fans all over Japan await our findings.
YUP
YUP
If not, this national miko appreciation tour will have been for nothing!


RED STRING
So you had better get some good shots of the back of their heads this time.
I shouldn't have to remind you that we're putting together a special report on those for the Hakama Girls Appreciation Association home page.
RED RIBBON
RED OBJECT
PURPLE CLOTH
STAINLESS OBJECT
DOUBLE-TIED

Hm? Isn't the hakama a pair of pants?

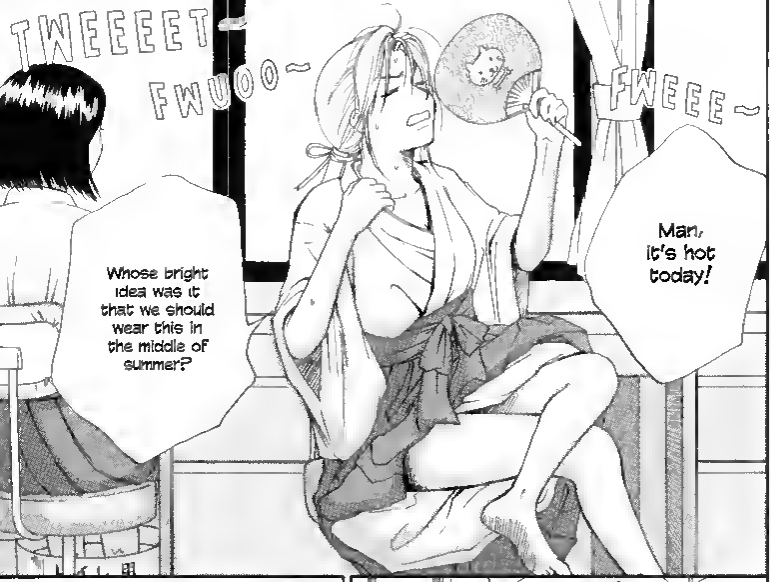
There are huge differences.
Just look at the hair ornaments!

Who brought this total newbie along!?
I'M NOT EXPLAINING ANOTHER THING!
I believe it was you who dragged him along, on account of him being an anime otaku from the same university.
Sure, there are different types of hakama, both divided like a pair of pants, and the skirt kind. But these are andon type, or undivided.
The colours can vary from an almost orange red to scarlet.
That they're tied just below the chest area is a feature.
When you remove the hakama, there's the white robe.
Ankle-length and tied with a cord around the waist.
The only time you'll have a chance to see that is at a misogi*, of course.
*water purification ceremony
Is it because it's hard to use the toilet while you're wearing the pants kind, you think?
Stop imagining things like that, idiot!
And underneath that, just so there are no bra lines, only an undershirt. .
Could there possibly be any miko with glasses here?
Don't get your hopes up, there doesn't seem to be many of those.

Roger!
Listen up Miko aren't like the women out *there*, they're delicate and fragile creatures.
So make sure you do nothing to offend them.
願申込所
All right, time for the all-important photographs. Come on, act casual.
But, I think we're being watched.
WHISPER
WHISPER
Sure. The ones before this were all horsefaced.
Faces
Hair
Figure
Face
Moe
Service
Ages
Faces... How about a 4?
The fact that they're all different types makes you want to set a high score for moe as well, doesn't it?
This is well worth the trip!
Not half bad.

Excuse me...
Why do I have to—
You go ask them for a blessing or something
Keep her busy while we take some pictures
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
じ
ひいっ
Oh, n-nothing Never mind
Yeah, what?
Seemed like they all wore the same sort of badge
Some people... Do they think they can just keep me waiting all day? The cold air's getting out!
ひしゃん

With this, I can catch them the moment they turn their backs.
We must have startled the poor delicate flower...
I say we abandon the close-quarters approach...
Wh-what was with her...?
What is this?
They really don't move around much
One hour later
...They don't move around much.
Ten minutes later
Oh, the suspicious trio is still here
Must have a lot of time on their hands.
Seriously I even told him to boost his stamina before the trip!
Let's find some water.
Micchi!

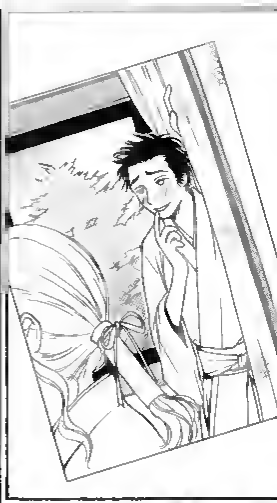


*Ikkyuu Soujun. Zen priest. Lived in the Edo period. Now, there's a whole bunch of picture books and anime about him

Looks like they're fighting again
I keep telling you, I don't have a lolita complex!
You mustn't listen to that!
Shut the hell up! How many times are you going to play that same phrase!?
Go practice outside, you damned lolicon priest!

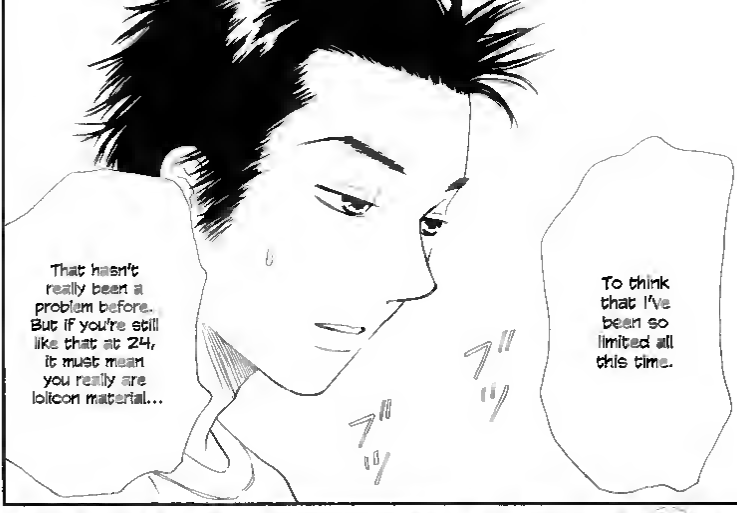
What do you say I end this fruitless dispute once and for all?
People.
Like what?
But there's a reason for that...
So maybe I was looking at her.

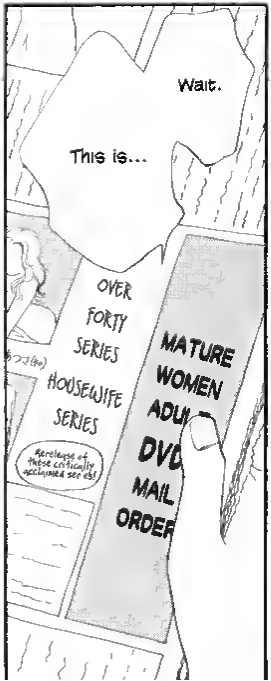
When you put it that way...
Even if you don't realise it yourself, this is probably a case of abnormal fascination with girls in sailor uniforms. Or, in other words,
The girls I've liked...
a lolita complex!
Why have they all been in...



What's this!?
No matter how much you try to seal it away, that is clearly...
WHEN DID YOU...?
The face of a dangerous beast lusting after a 15-year-old girl

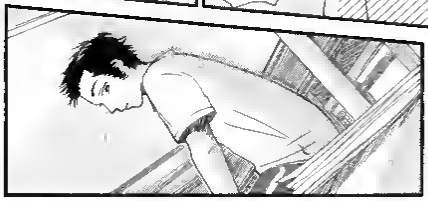
Are you okay, Micchi?
Yeah...
フラ
フラ
NEWS
Priest from local shrine in Scandal with 15-year old miko
Satomi Shojiro-u (24)
Sailor uniforms?
He was always so serious about his work.
I thought he was a good person. I never would have suspected him of something like this.


That hasn't really been a problem before. But if you're still like that at 24, it must mean you really are lolicon material...
To think that I've been so limited all this time.


Wait.
This is...
OVER FORTY SERIES
HOUSEWIFE SERIES
MATURE WOMEN
DVD MAIL ORDER

ストン

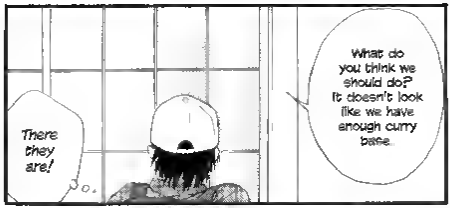
Aaaah! Disciplinary discharge!
Tabloids!
Personal ruin!

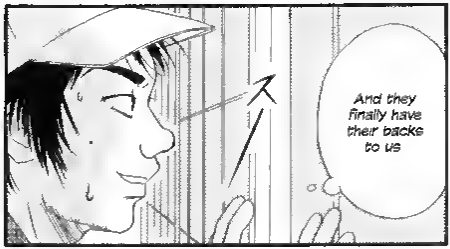


Let's see here, first time orders limited to 10000 yen...
Some hot MILFs, that's the ticket.
That's it, the complete opposite of lolitas!
びくっ
"After them"? How?
Here's our chance. After them!
Ah!
Pretend like you don't see him
What's up with that guy?

Isn't this trespassing —?
We can't very well go back empty-handed, can we?
Especially not after our members said they were counting on us.

If Satomi's going to come here on his day off without any warning, this is more than good enough for him.


What do you think we should do? It doesn't look like we have enough curry base.
There they are!

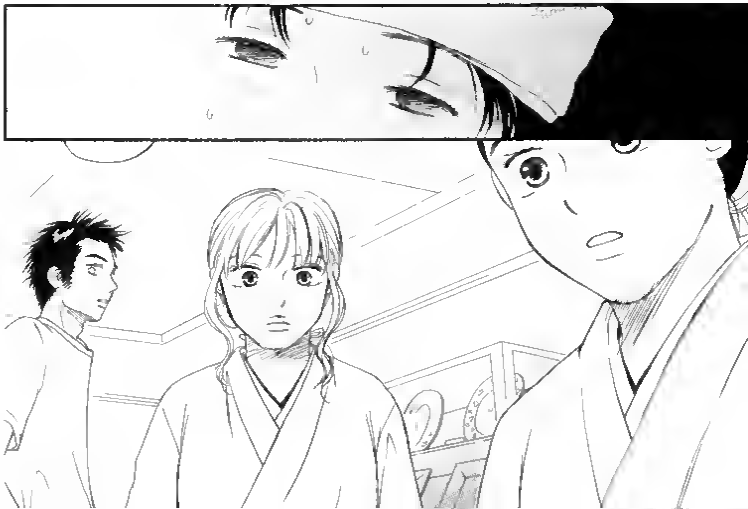

And they finally have their backs to us

But that just looks too pitiful. Let's add some mayo to it, at least.
She's coming this way!
You're such a sadist, boss!
MWHAHAHAHA!
TOPPINGS
Oh shit.
Hide, quick!
But where...?
WC
Over here!
ガチャッ

Pardon me!
Whoa, it's those guys again.
These people disturbed my moment of blissful defecation by peeping!
Ehh!?

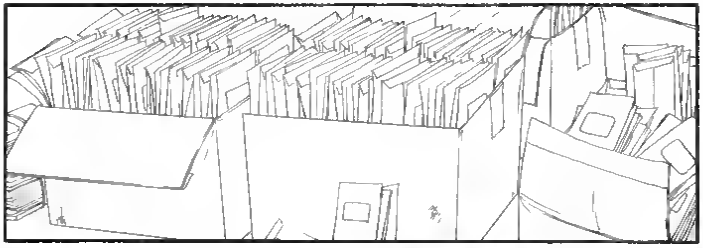
Those cameras... Were you going to take sneak shots of us?
What!?
WELL, I DOUBT YOU GOT ANYTHING USEFUL, THOUGH
I heard from another shrine that someone had been taking pictures of their dressing room.
You're dead!
Wait, please. Our organisation is merely for expressing a pure love for all miko—
Fool!
Love this!
BAN
CRASH
TWITCH
TWITCH
CCCCK

NUOOOOOO



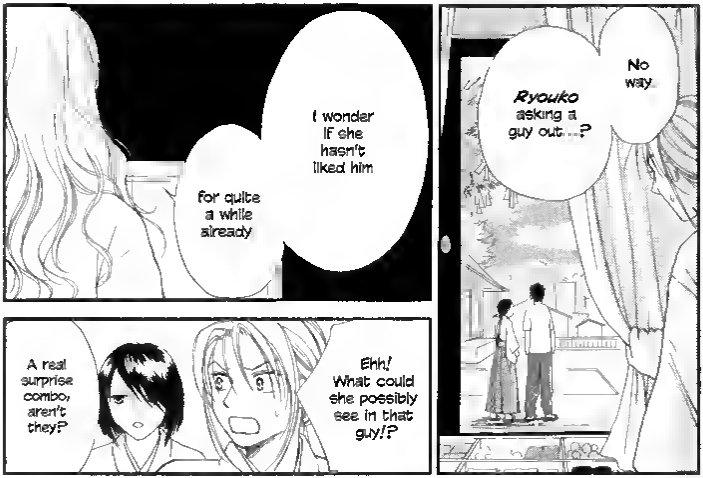
Ah...
Ehm...
Looks like you suffered a heatstroke there
Are you okay?
By the way, are those friends of yours?
Ahh! The president!
But we just get those straight out of the copy machine...
Shhh!
Pictures of their hair ornaments?
Yes. We really wanted some to put on our site...
If it's just taking pictures, that's no big deal. We pose with foreign visitors all the time.
Nitta-san, why don't you model for them?

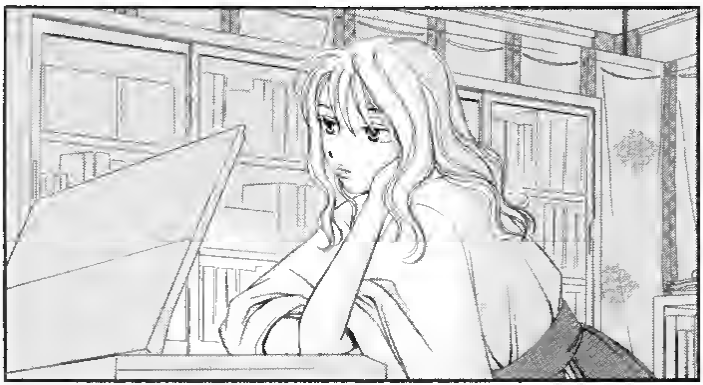
Me? I'm studying to become a priest
Excuse me. Do you work here?
Eh?
Well... If you're fine with just me doing it.
What...?
We just had to ask, to take pictures?
*Please don't do this on days when they're busy
But it's great that we got a lot of good shots this time
Faces 4
Service 4
Loveliness of hair ornaments 2
Let's try even harder tomorrow!
Me too
HA HA
Look at miko differently now.
I...

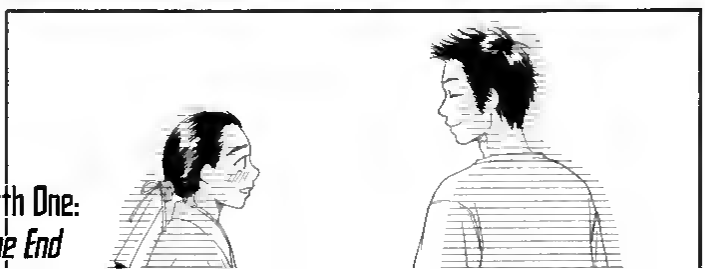


Satomi-san ..
That lunch wasn't much to cheer for
MOSTLY JUST EGGS WITH MAYO...
Ahh, I'm hungry.

But... Curry two times in one day?
What you had before wasn't very curry-like, though...
Oh, you think it's strange?
Would you care to go there after this?
I know a place that serves great curry.
Nah, it's fine. Let's go


I wonder if she hasn't liked him for quite a while already
No way
Ryouko asking a guy out...?
A real surprise combo, aren't they?
Ehh! What could she possibly see in that guy!?

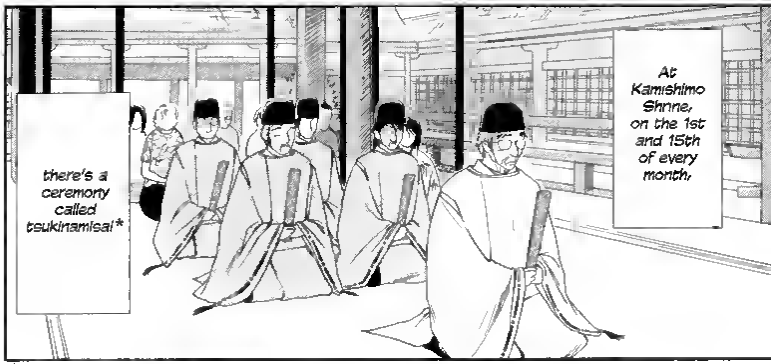




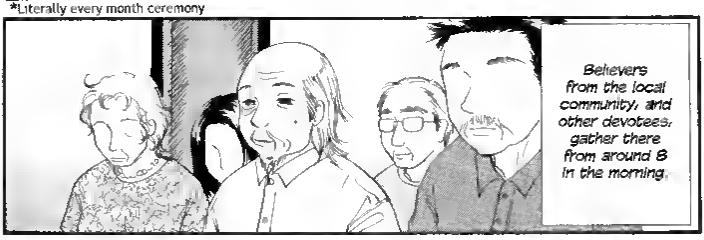
Fourth One: *The End*

Fifth One:
Shinjirou, go forth and mingle

Imisuna
Sandy soil used for purification purposes. Can often be seen gathered in cone-shaped piles, called tatesuna, near a ceremonial site.
40cm



*Literally every month ceremony

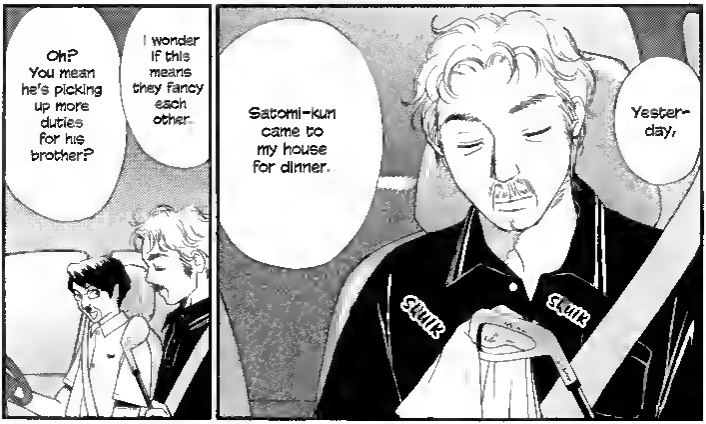


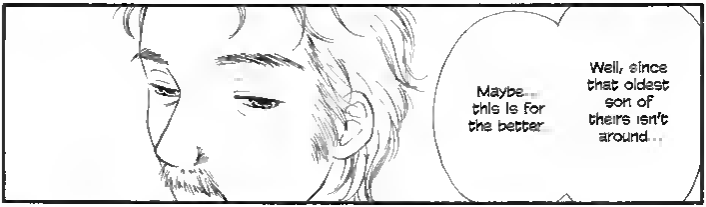
つみという
つみはあらじと
しなどのかぜの〜
Everyone takes part in the purification by reciting the Oharae no Kotoba together
...I'm totally out of it.
It is a humble form of purification and a prayer for everyday peace and tranquillity
CLAP
CLAP
The previous day
Why...
Are you in my house?
Since Nitta-san was offering, I ended up drinking a fair bit
The booze from yesterday must still be in my system
ニャラニャラ

And that's really all there is to it?
On the way home, I told him we were having sukiyaki tonight. He said he'd love to have that, so I invited him along.
What? Sure.
Living alone, it's not often I get to eat things like that.
I invited him for dinner.
Sorry to intrude like this.
We have plenty of meat, so don't hold back now.
Would that be all right?
You want a beer too?
Well, that's fine then.
Aah... That meat was great.
I wonder if I can impose on them again...
D U U H

Not bad.
This time, you brought him home to see the parents?
You don't have to put it that way!
This is almost like you're going out, isn't it?
We're not like that... yet...
Guess he wasn't a lolicon, after all. That's good, at least.
But if you really do want to go out with the guy, you should just straight up tell him about it.
Looks like they're done
Ah
Satomi-kun, was it?
It's been a while
Have you settled in yet?

I can more or less manage the more common purifications myself now
I see
It's one of the representatives from the Ujiko association
Ah.
Yes!
Please don't get too accustomed to these things, though
It's not good to forget the original purpose.
Oh? Where are our gonguuji and negi?
They're already out doing important representation work with some other clients
ブオオン


Yesterday,
Satomi-kun came to my house for dinner.
I wonder if this means they fancy each other.
Oh? You mean he's picking up more duties for his brother?


Well, since that oldest son of theirs isn't around...
Maybe... this is for the better.

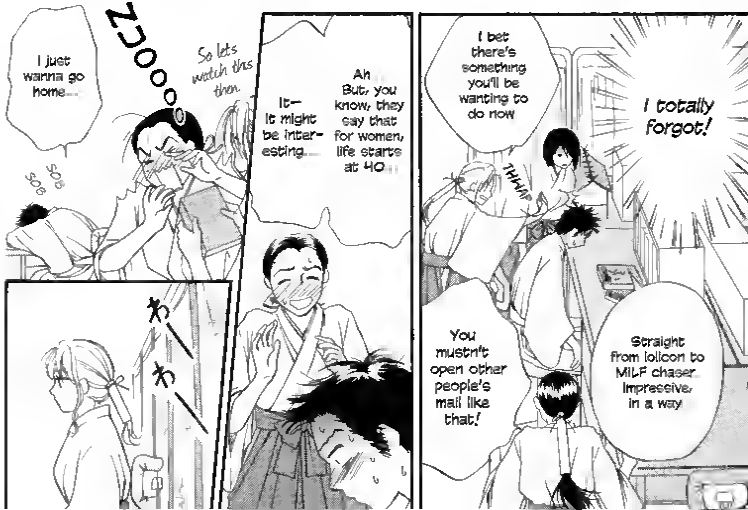
SLAM
Great golf weather we're having.
Sorry to keep you waiting.

Cheers! I've brought the bills, fresh off the press.
The sacred sake's here too!

The shrines expect to be called upon for purification ceremonies and to receive donations. And in return, they create work for the people and tradesmen in the area.
坂下酒蔵
It's a good business partnership.
No matter which shrine you look at, there are almost always three organisations, formed by the people who live around them. The board of representatives, the ujiko association, and the ujiko youth association.
They mainly assist with the operation of the shrine, or help out at festivals and the like.
GLARE
びくっ
Ah.
Thank you.
Getting awfully close with Ryouko-chan, aren't you?
You. We heard it from the head miko.

Maybe we should just talk to the head priest or the represent-atives
N-no, wait!
Don't try to tell us you didn't know it's strictly forbidden for the priests to lay even a finger on the miko
This presents a bit of a problem to us
But— You can't say we're going out or anything...
Huh!?
Well, that's the issue here, ain't it?
Listen up.
From 6:30 today we're having a meeting with the youth association in the banquet hall
We'll have a good long talk there!
Oh, right There was a package for you yesterday
Did this somehow turn into a big thing?
Crap.
Misono-san!
They look more like a middle-aged association to me

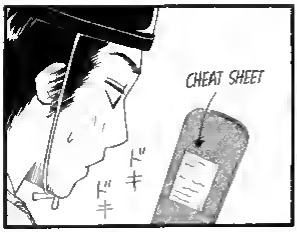
*Okami, in this case, is the lady who manages an inn or possibly a restaurant

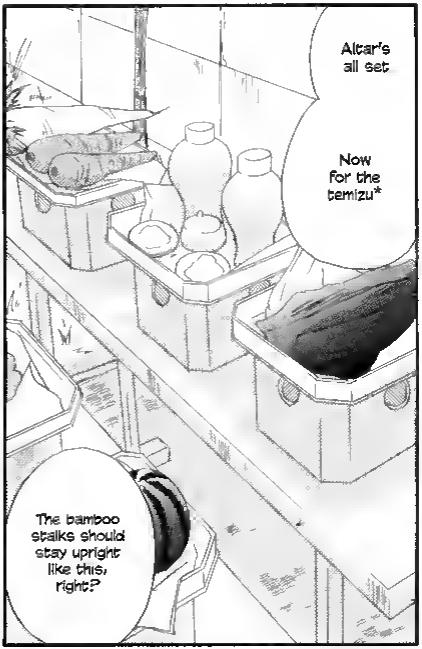

I just wanna go home...
sob sob
So lets watch this then
ooooo
It— It might be interesting...
Ah But, you know, they say that for women, life starts at 40
わーわー
I bet there's something you'll be wanting to do now
I totally forgot!
THUMP
You mustn't open other people's mail like that!
Straight from lolicon to MILF chaser. Impressive, in a way

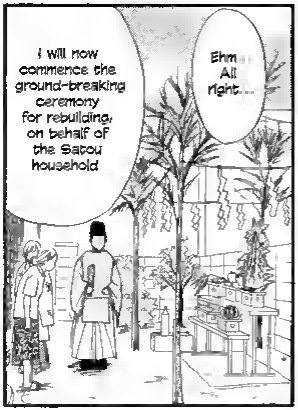
Satomi.
I have a ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of a wall scheduled at 3, could you go instead?
It was originally a request to a more popular Buddhist temple around here. But they were too busy, so they had to decline
Oh? Turned down elsewhere, so now they come to us?
Well, I suppose it's fine
Head miko
It's his first time doing the ground-breaking ceremony alone, so come along and see to it that everything goes smoothly

Hey, Akimoto-san.
We're going to be late, so please hurry.
...What?
Akimoto-san looked really busy. And I said I was interested, so she told me to go with you.
Why are you here!?
Let's do our best together.

Thank you so much for coming.
This is...
...just what I've been trying to avoid
Oh?
I thought we'd been called on by a construction company or something
...Okay.
But I expect that will be settled before long.
Whether to build or not hasn't been decided yet



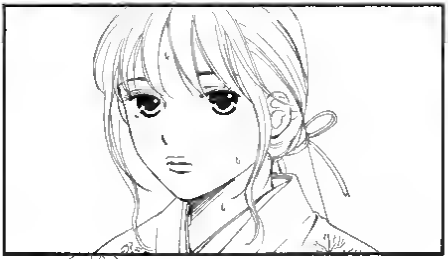




*water to wash one s hands with

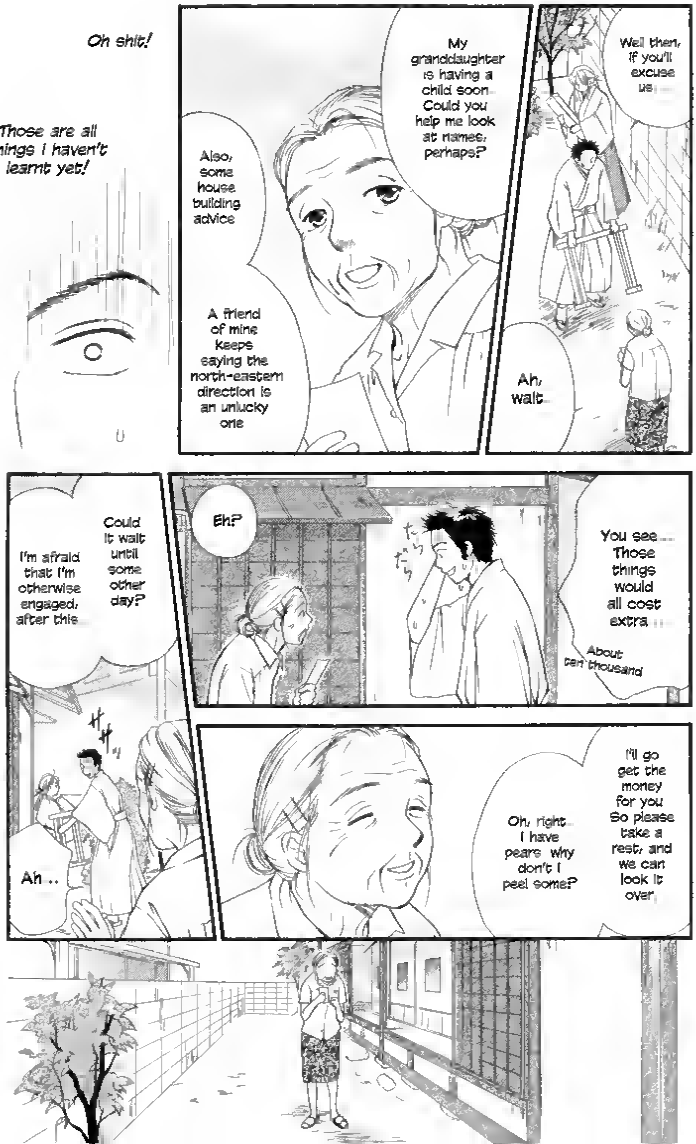
I wonder if the rumours about priests dying from dehydration at these things could be true.
Plastic
I'd heard that holding ceremonies outside in the middle of summer was hell.
Purification in the cardinal directions.
But this is even worse than I expected!
Three layers of clothing

I mustn't lose!
Take that!



As long as no one noticed...

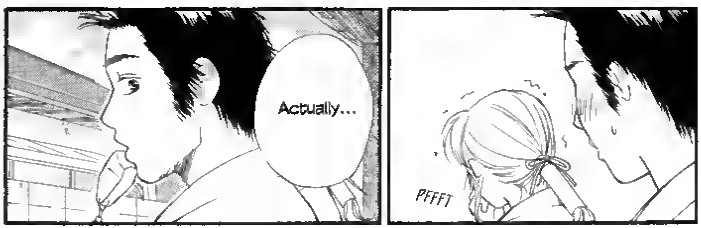
I messed up in three places
But...
Slight-


Oh shit!
Those are all things I haven't learnt yet!
My granddaughter is having a child soon... Could you help me look at names, perhaps?
Also, some house building advice
A friend of mine keeps saying the north-eastern direction is an unlucky one
Well then, if you'll excuse us...
Ah, wait...
Eh?
You see... Those things would all cost extra...
About ten thousand
Could it wait until some other day?
I'm afraid that I'm otherwise engaged, after this...
Ah..
I'll go get the money for you. So please take a rest, and we can look it over
Oh, right... I have pears. Why don't I peel some?

Umm...
She...
looked so lonely, didn't she?
'Scuse me!
On second thought, we—
ガラッ

If you want to talk, we'll listen for as long as you like.
What?
We have all the time in the world!
IIIAAA
Whoa! I'm sorry!

Well, I guese it does happen...
Do people tend to say that you're not the sharpest knife in the drawer?
I was just checking the edge before peeling these pears.


Actually...
PFFFT

On the other side of that wall,
there's a strip of land about a meter wide that belongs to me
The wall was originally in the correct place
But two years ago, their child fell ill, and was confined to a wheelchair.
They said they wanted to exchange their car for a larger model
Back then, there was no way they'd be able to fit a bigger car there, so I let them shift the wall to this side
But they never bought that all-important car.
And in the end, they started planting trees and flowers there instead
Though, after the ceremony today, I hope they will also be wanting to return the wall to its original position.
If that's how it is, wouldn't it have been faster to just ask a lawyer...?
Oh? It was to persuade your *neighbours* to do some building?
I can't bring myself to do that.
That's why I'm asking the gods to help settle this.

That girl next door.
She died, didn't she?
That's right. Three months ago.
How'd you know?
The wheelchair just stands there abandoned in the garden.
And there are no children's clothes hanging out to dry
It was some kind of illness having to do with her spine.
So, I'd like them to return that piece of land...
But I don't have the spirit to take them to court over it.

My real family lives far up north, in Hokkaido.
So every day I could see her smile or talk to her was something to live for.
Even if I detest the parents, she was such a good girl...
The good die young.
While the elderly are stuck with their futile lives...

We haven't finished discussing the children's sumo tournament yet.
Excuse me...
Satomi-san.
Hurry up and get here already~
That bastard didn't show up after all.
The little shit. Ran away, did he!?
Sing something for us instead!
Oh, come on. It'll be fine.
Do Natsuiro no Nancy!
Nah, it's gotta be Asaka Yui's Believe Again.
How about Itou Tsukasa!?
BWAHAHA
You people are off by a generation.

All from the 80s. You most likely do not want to listen to these. (But they are on YouTube if you absolutely must.)

HA HA HA HA
You're not joining them?
Well...
They're all juiced up already.
It's kind of difficult to join in halfway
And besides...
風水学
I wouldn't be surprised if the reason people get sucked up in all these crazy new religions is that we don't do enough of that nowadays.
Yeah, but you know, it's important to listen to the concerns of the parishioners
キミ
It's because you spent four hours talking to that old lady.

The book on top is about Feng Shui the other one is an introduction to naming.

Being needed like that
actually makes me very happy.
I'm sick and tired of not being able to do anything right.
I guess that's one way of
seeing off the deceased.
ぱたん
ドキッ

Eh?
What was that?
Heh. Just talking to myself
Shouu? Honshouchuu?*
Shouu,
Honnu, Shiuu, Chuuu, is it?
* "Soy sauce" and "rent shouchu" (a kind of booze) Well, that's what he heard anyway.
Don't... Look at me so much.

The four most important states in the cycle of rebirth according to the Kusha sect of Japanese Buddhism. Shouu is the moment of accepting life. Honnu is the time you're living. Shiuu is the moment of death and Chuuu is the time until you accept to live again (You'll see later why she knows this stuff.)

I suppose I really... do like her that way, after all.

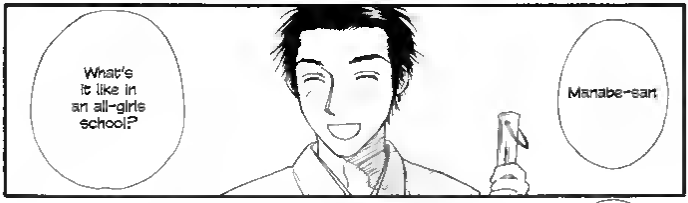
Fifth One: *The End*

Sixth One:

Young nobleman musician

Hey!
This parking lot is for employees only.
ドドドドドドドドド
<No Parking>
車禁止
駐
Oh...
Thank you.
The second one over there is for visitors
駐車

Ow ow ow!
ジャーン
SQUINCH
That guy... Couldn't be a priest here, could he?
No way...

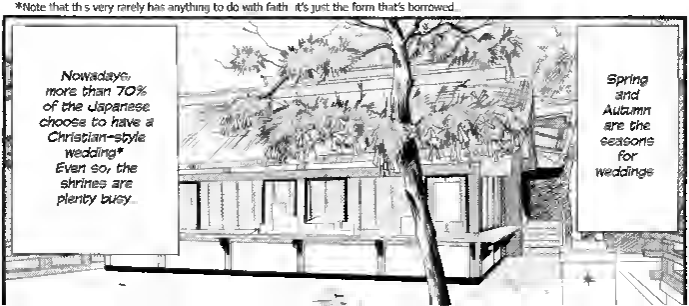

What's it like in an all-girls school?
Manabe-san

Everyone's totally annoying.
And they keep teasing the younger male teachers.

You're kidding! There's no way that wouldn't be popular.
There must be things like guys waiting outside to confess their love, and stuff.
I'm telling you, that's not how it is.
Not really.
There's an all-boys technical school right next to it, right?
I bet they keep chasing after you guys.
Those two sure have been getting along lately.
You must've kicking something. Come on, fess up!
I've already...
What are you doing, Misono-san?

This weird guy just went into the inner sanctuary.
What's this? What weird guy?
Ugh!
SHUFFLE
Oh?
Akimoto-san, someone you know?
Hell no.
Why would I know someone that suspicious?
If he's here to steal something, he must be punished.
How about you put those Kendo skills to good use and actually be of service around here?
Yeah!
...Hm?

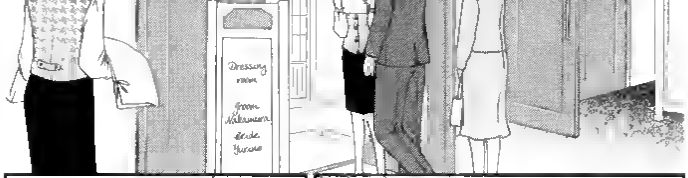
*Note that this very rarely has anything to do with faith. It's just the form that's borrowed.

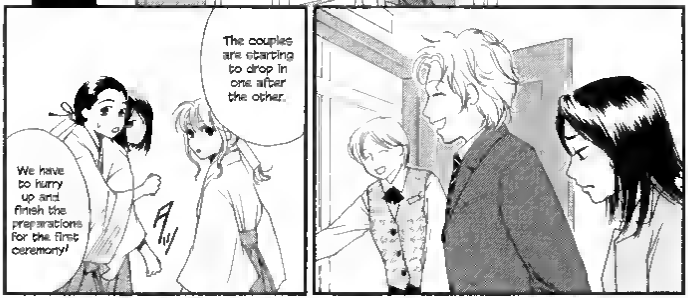

Nowadays, more than 70% of the Japanese choose to have a Christian-style wedding* Even so, the shrines are plenty busy.
Spring and Autumn are the seasons for weddings

I've divided the schedule into 30-minute segments
And it's packed full from 10 o'clock onwards, so do your best
Right
Today, we have four weddings, two with a full reception included

*Shant for ranryouou
Said to depict a Chinese emperor in ancient times who, despite his bravery and wit, could not get the respect of his troops on the battlefield on account of his beautiful and gentle appearance, and therefore took to wearing a dragon mask

It's been ages since we had enough people to do a ryouou* dance
Those leather pants and shades make him look kind of flashy
But he can play any instrument easily, even though he's just 29
GAAH—
Who are you talking about?
He's a gonnegi who used to work here until about a year ago And he's supposed to return today
BEEN THERE 7 MONTHS
I can't reach him on his cell phone either
I hope nothing's happened to him
By the way, hasn't Kesen-numa-kun showed up yet?



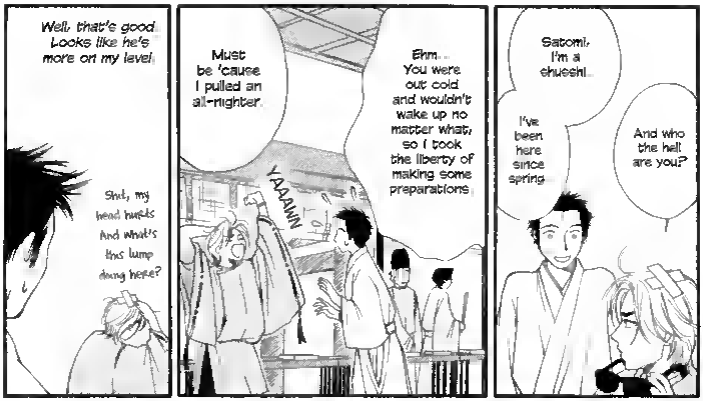

The couples are starting to drop in one after the other.
We have to hurry up and finish the preparations for the first ceremony!

And it'll be bad if we don't start the charcoal fire for the shou* player soon.
Okay... Red cups, check. Sacred branch, check. Now, to explain things to the bride and groom....
Ah, that stand is crooked!

*Bamboo pipe reed instrument. It's warmed during pauses in a performance, so that moisture doesn't collect in it.

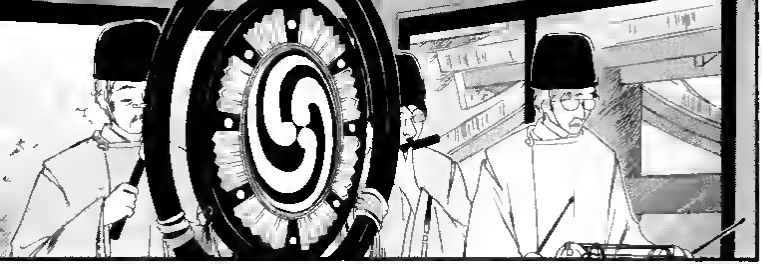
Well, stuff... Akimoto-san sort of tricked us...
What happened to Kesennuma-san!?
Ah
Fix that right away...
Hey, part-timers. I told you the seams on those sheets are supposed to go along the stage, not across it, right?

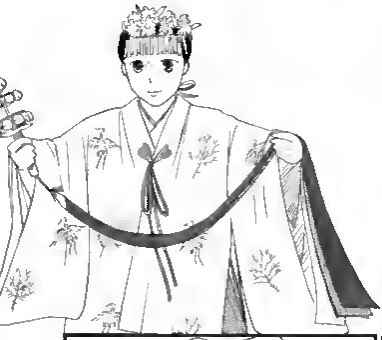
Ah,
Kesennuma's here!
Hey, presto!
...And how is he supposed to handle the important musical performance like that?
We don't have time for that. As long as he's sitting, the hunting clothes should take care of it.
But what about his clothes...?
Ha! ha! ha!...
He's just a little hung over.
Is he all right!?
Whoa!
DONK
Huh..
What was I doing?
Uhmm..

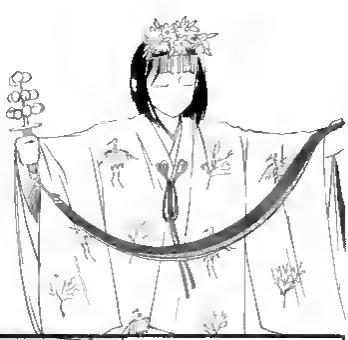

Well, that's good. Looks like he's more on my level.
Shit, my head hurts. And what's this lump doing here?
Must be 'cause I pulled an all-nighter.
YAAAWN
Ehm... You were out cold and wouldn't wake up no matter what, so I took the liberty of making some preparations.
Satomi, I'm a shoshi.
I've been here since spring.
And who the hell are you?

We will now commence the marriage ceremony between the Fukuda and Hamaguchi families.

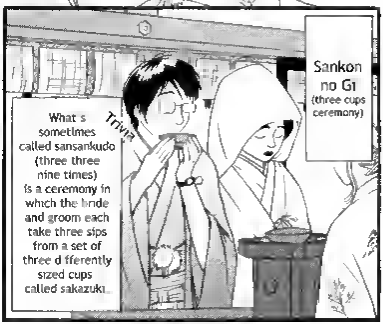
Reading of the ritual prayer.







W-we are g-g-gathered here on t-this j-joyous day t-t-to
Reading of the vows
Why do allguys have to be so totally weak when it's time to do this?
SHAKE
SHAKE
Giggle
THE FATHER OF THE GROOM WITH THE DUBIOUS HONOUR OF INTRODUCING ALL THE KELATIVES LAST OF ALL


Sankon no Gi
(three cups ceremony)
Trivia
What's sometimes called sansankudo (three three nine times) is a ceremony in which the bride and groom each take three sips from a set of three differently sized cups called sakazuki.

This part is just as pitiful to watch every time...

Trivia

The sakaki* branch is turned clockwise so that it is presented before the kami stem first, and then placed on the stand

*a kind of evergreen

This is followed by two bows, two handclaps, and finally another bow after which the bride and groom return to their seats (All while facing each other.)

Despite being required to learn this ceremony from the miko beforehand, pretty much no one gets it right when they have to do it for real

Sacred branch worship

This is done at funerals, regular shrine visits, car purifications, you name it However...

To be able to play it this smoothly, that's just...
The hichiriki is notoriously difficult to carry a steady note with.
This guy is good!
GLANCE

!
I was just dying to go to the bathroom the whole time.
Haah. 30 minutes rest, and then it's the last one
Well, it's true I've had my share of fights with him
Silence, you!
Since you're this riled up about it, people would *normally* assume he's someone you messed around with in your yankee days
Good thing you're the head miko, huh?
Messed around with?
Akimoto-san and that *guy*...
But, you know,

You're just as good as I heard
You really can't judge a book by its cover...
Man, I'm hungry...
What I really wanted was to be a pro musician and play in a band. But I was more of less forced to choose this path instead.
Well, I suppose. My family runs a huge shrine, and I'm an only child. So I got special education.
Okay...
I'm on biwa* and backup vocals.
Here, have this old demo tape we made! It's a fusion of classical and rock.
*Japanese lute
Your ex!?
Yeah. Mika is my ex-girlfriend.
Did something happen between you and the head miko?
Oh, right...
The board of representatives was less than amused.
One day when we were making out behind the main shrine, some guys from the youth association spotted us.
We were together for a year or so, but...

There, there
You've really done it now.
Hey, wait
Kesennuma-kun, you will submit a written account of how you have reflected on the matter
What's up with the difference in treatment here?
"That's what I figured they'd say"
You may feel it's too harsh, but I don't think you have much room to complain here
It is the prevailing opinion that you should be fired
People who skip work to engage in indecent activities are not qualified to be miko

...Huh?
It was just... He made me do it
You people...
You're mistaken
Are you really so attached to your job as a miko that you're willing to put all the blame on me!?
Now look here
BONK
What kind of person would happily put this disgusting picture up on their homepage?
Profile
Damn straight I am
Besides, you've been pissing me off for some time now
Who the hell pimps out their car with fluffy white leopard-pattern on the dashboard!? There are limits, even to bad taste!
Like you have any right to say that! You have no sense of style whatsoever!
SNAP

With the broken leg and all, I couldn't even sit up straight. So I was of little use to them as a priest, and was picked on quite a bit
Being pinned with all the blame for it, even my old man was angry with me. And I was sent away to a run-down little shrine out in the sticks
The following year was absolutely miserable
That part even I've heard about
About Nitta-san's proposed marriage
Around that time, they were trying to set Ryouko-chan up to be married
The other miko were all new people, and I have a feeling they weren't actually that keen on letting her go. Mika, that is
And I only heard about this later, but
He's always considered it a waste of talent, so he's been helping me out with returning here
The gonguji here, unlike the guuji, appreciates old court music, and he's more of a realist
With my brother.
WHISPER
What? No, I can't. Work is really busy today, okay?
WHISPER
Sorry, but I really have to hang up now

I'm going to the bathroom for a bit
There's still some time before we have to guide the next couple
Got it
Dressing room
Ah Is it time already?
Not yet
Why don't you stop this?
.....

This is the first time I've seen a bride look like that
If you're really that troubled by it, why not just quit?
Does my face really look that awful?
Just now, I saw the groom on the phone with his other woman
But you know about that, don't you?
Look here, miss...
Adults have all sorts of circumstances to consider All sorts...

You mean like how he's a nice person, and he'll always come back to you in the end?
Or how your parents would be happy? How it would be embarrassing to cancel this late, not to mention a waste of money?
It'll feel better if you throw away your foolish pride and ignore what other people think, you know.
If you're going to break up in the future anyway what's so different from doing it now?
Look.
You're already this unhappy.

Huh!?
The bride ran away?
Wow.
That's right. Some guests in the lobby saw a figure in a white kimono calmly getting in a taxi and leaving!
Oh man. Poor groom.
But he must have done something wrong to deserve THAT.
Eh?
Did something happen, Misono-san?

N-no.
Nothing at all...
ドキッ
Your leg... It's fine now?
Of course
I was just thinking how you're still as good as ever
Ah, well
Oh, sure...

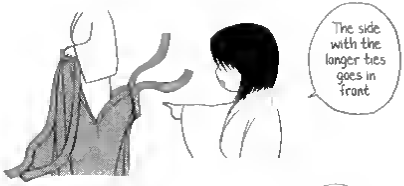
Look... I'm sorry.
About, you know, back then.
.....
Ah, no I wasn't exactly acting very grown-up either...
So anyway, how are things lately?
What things?
Like, with guys and such
What's this...!?
Those two look like they're getting along just fine.
Doesn't seem like they broke up because they hated each other's guts or anything
I think there's something Akimoto-san didn't want to tell him, though
Not much going on there...
Hey! Stop sliding up to me!
Why don't we go on another tour of the shrines and temples around here? It's been a while.

It's simple to read people's feelings
You just need to pay attention to the details, and have a bit of intuition.
Another insight?
More or less
The thing I understand the least might be
my own emotions...
In that case...

But,
being together like this, I may have actually fallen in love with you.
...What!?
She's obviously seen through me already.
About that... You mean like how someone's got a crush on someone else, stuff like that?
I'm... Not really sure.

First off, wear the singlet and tie it with one of the cords. Wear the white robe on top of that and tie it with the second cord

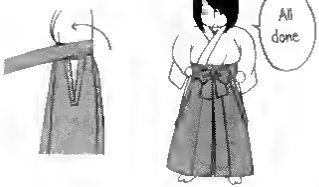
Next, put the hakama on.



Bring the front ties behind your back, cross them once and pull them to the front again.

Then, cross them neatly across the front and bring them back behind you to make a firm knot.

Finally bring the rear ties to the front and tie them off in a pretty butterfly shape.



Afterword

- The subtitle 'Me and the Miko' was supposed to be something more like a story of a sporty priest', but that was rejected for being too stale
- From the start, I planned for this story to have a completely different feel to it. But then again, a more serious work about the ins and outs of the "business" isn't likely to be very popular, hence the strategy of disguising it as a love comedy
- I studied up on all sorts of things for this, but didn't investigate things too deeply. (Having worked at a ryokan, though, most things should be correct...)
- The start of serialisation was originally planned for an earlier date. Which is why the first story, which came out in winter, takes place in spring
- Satomi's distress over the relationship with 15-year-old Chiho is a main theme. But since rules have been getting stricter lately, I couldn't really draw them in more risque situations

~ Tanaka Yuki for Fanatics ~

I have previously put out two collections of short stories* And I happened to see some people on the net saying things like "she should have enough material for another one" While there's enough unpublished material for another collection, the things I did around the time of Haru no Kohitsuji are a bit too "lollol" for publication now So, regrettably, there won't be any more collections Sorry about that.

*By the names of Strange Love and Fetish

All right then Let's meet again in volume 2

田中ユキ
Tanaka Yuki